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August 23, 2011

# THE Christian CENTURY

*Thinking Critically. Living Faithfully.*

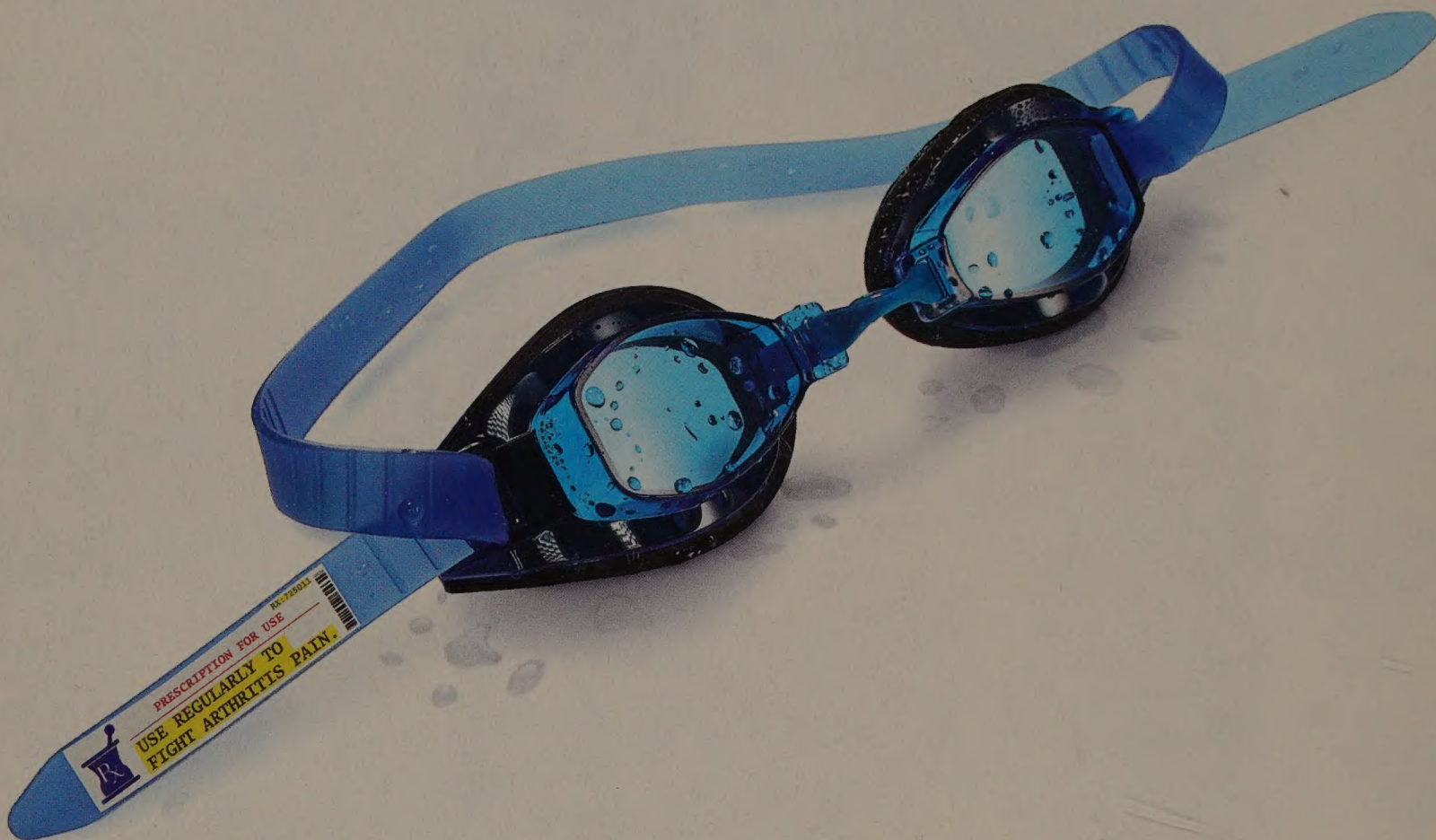
## Sexual ethics and Dan Savage

What Christians can learn

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Ten years  
after 9/11





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### Richard J. Mouw

Richard J. Mouw is president of Fuller Theological Seminary and the author of *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (InterVarsity Press).

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Cover photo courtesy Dan Savage



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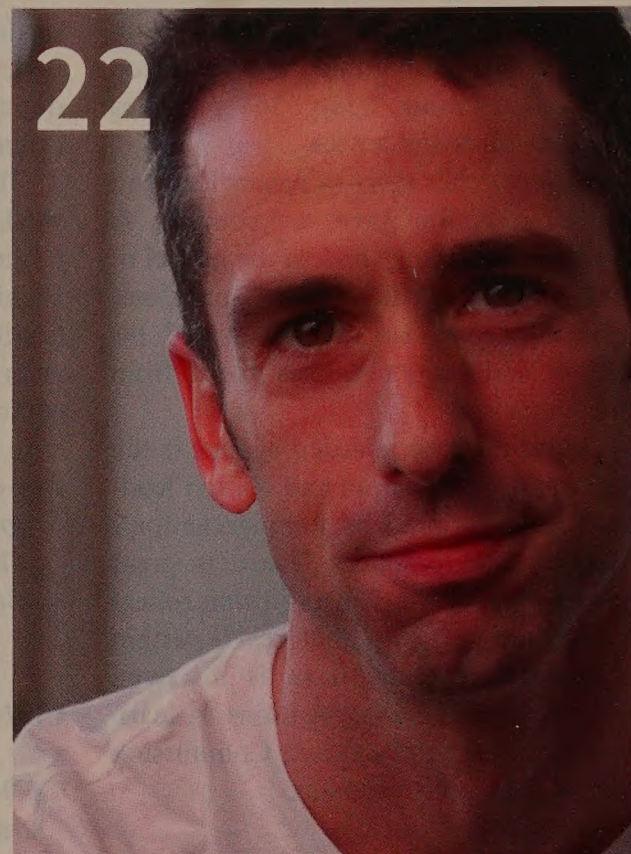
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## Pastoral listening

**M**ary Clark Moschella's article on pastoral ethnography ("Deep listening," July 26) provides excellent tools and advice.

However, her story of pastor Ken and his congregation gave me concern. A resistance to change and to the gospel of Jesus Christ (specifically the Great Commission) seems to have distanced his church, and many churches like it, from the *missio dei*.

What must be guarded against is the temptation for pastors and church leaders to be co-opted by a congregation's dysfunctional practices. There is great need for pastors to learn to listen reflectively to the stories that reside within congregations, but there is an even greater need for congregations to learn to listen to Christ's Great Commission and Great Commandment.

William C. Maisch  
Damascus, Md.

### What Unitarians believe . . .

**T**he news report "Can creedless Unitarians make it another 50 years?" (July 26) is a misinformed and condescending caricature of our faith. The "heresy" of Jesus' humanity has been around as long as Christianity; the name Unitarian first appeared in Transylvania in the 16th century. It is not Unitarians but Unitarian Universalists who now proudly celebrate our 50th anniversary as an association.

Our affirmation of religious experience over religious belief has confounded the orthodox ever since Ralph Waldo Emerson asserted the primacy of "life passed through the fire of thought" in his 1838 Divinity School Address. The reporter sniffs that we promote "seven largely secular principles" but misses the point that we regard human dignity, justice, the search for truth and meaning, encouragement to spiritual growth, world

community, the use of the democratic process and respect for the interdependent web of all existence as *essentially religious* principles.

The article notes as if it were a sign of weakness our denomination's lively attention to religious language and identity. Is this not that to which every religious tradition ought to attend? As was said by reforming Polish Unitarians in the 16th century, with perhaps unintended humor, "We ought not be ashamed if in some way our church should improve."

John Gibbons  
First Parish  
Bedford, Mass.

### Christianity in Japan . . .

**T**he news article "MacArthur encouraged religion in postwar Japan" (June 28) cries out for a supplement. Certainly it is true that General Douglas MacArthur strongly encouraged the sending of missionaries to postwar Japan, stating, "the problem is basically theological." However, it was only in 1947 that former missionaries were allowed to return, and only in 1948 that new missionaries were permitted to enter Japan. During the interim, it was the Japanese Christians themselves who carried on the Christian witness, working under tremendous hardships because of the damage done to the churches and their leaders.

Also, we need not discredit what was accomplished by the missionary efforts of both Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the postwar period. It is very unfair to say that "relatively few of the 2,000 or so [missionaries] who flooded into Japan could speak Japanese." Learning the language was given highest priority for new missionaries; a number became very proficient, doing all their work in churches, schools and outreach in the Japanese language. Out of that effort there came into being Christian

institutions—schools, hospitals, social service organizations—which are now flourishing and serving not only the church but Japanese society as a whole.

James Cogswell  
Black Mountain, N.C.

### Roadside tradition . . .

**M**acKenzie Scott's thoughtful essay "Roadside crosses" (July 12) stirred a memory concerning a similar use of crosses in the western states, coming out of the Hispanic tradition of *descansos*, or "places of rest." They originated in the belief in Hispanic cultures that demons followed funeral processions all the way to the grave, seeking to snatch the soul from the body before burial. If it was a long walk, the pallbearers could get tired, so sanctified places of rest were designated along the way. They were marked with a cross, which could be decorated with wildflowers.

Nowadays *descansos* have evolved into roadside memorials, consisting of handmade crosses festooned with flowers and placed at the scene of the death. Northern New Mexico has many of these, but they can also be found in Ohio. The custom may appeal to the young who claim to be "spiritual but not religious."

Barbara Gaul  
Massillon, Ohio

**T**he use of roadside crosses, or *descansos*, comes from the Hispanic world, but it is not limited to that. Around 1292, when Queen Eleanor of England died in Lincoln, Edward I had elaborate stone crosses built at each of the 12 resting stops on the procession to Westminster Abbey. Perhaps the most famous of these is Charing Cross in midtown London.

Jim Burke  
Santa Fe, N.M.



August 23, 2011

## The Norwegian response

Norway prides itself on being peace-loving, free and open. It maintained its neutrality during both world wars (although many Norwegians resisted when the Nazis occupied their country). Though it belongs to NATO, it refused to host nuclear weapons during the cold war. Known for awarding the annual Nobel Peace Prize, Norway brokered the Oslo Accords in 1993 between Israel and the Palestinians and has worked to mediate other conflicts around the world.

So it was a huge shock to normally tranquil Norway when anti-Muslim, anti-Marxist extremist Anders Breivik, claiming that he was acting to ward off “Muslim domination,” set off explosives in downtown Oslo and went on a shooting rampage at a political camp for youth, killing 77 in all. This was the Norwegians’ 9/11 moment, said some, and the country would never be the same again.

Yet Norway’s leaders have urged caution in responding to the massacre, and its people have shown calm and solidarity in their expressions of grief. At a memorial service for the victims, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said, “My greatest thanks goes to the Norwegian people, who appeared responsible when needed, who kept their dignity, who chose democracy.” He reaffirmed the need for “dialogue and tolerance” in the land, and he expressed the hope that when political work resumed, leaders would “behave with the same wisdom and respect as the Norwegian people” had shown.

Mindful of the American response to 9/11, Norwegians apparently want to avoid overreacting and seeing themselves only as victims. They don’t want to adopt a bunker mentality. “We do not want barbed wire, roadblocks and weapons as part of everyday life in Norway,” said Norway’s police chief. Before the bombing, the only public building in Oslo that was secured against terrorist attacks was the U.S. embassy.

After 9/11, the United States embarked on two wars that proved to be ill-considered and financially ruinous. It countenanced torture and secret rendition of prisoners. It allowed the degradation of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

The crimes of 9/11 were, in significant ways, different from the crimes committed by Anders Breivik. For one, the U.S. was attacked not by a lone extremist but by a militant group that made clear its wish to destroy America. Yet as we Americans mark the ten-year anniversary of 9/11 and look back on the nation’s response to that horrific crime, many of us will admire Norway’s calm and considered approach and its effort to respond in a way consistent with its deepest values and hopes.

**As the ten-year anniversary of 9/11 nears, Americans might well admire Norway’s calm approach to an atrocity.**



# CENTURY marks

**SILENT PRESENCE:** The late Abraham Joshua Heschel and Jack Reimer, both rabbis, once went to visit mutual friends who had just lost a loved one. When they arrived, Heschel hugged the grieving family members without uttering a word. Then he sat down and remained silent. After an hour passed, Heschel got up and hugged the mourners again; then the two rabbis departed. "I learned that you don't have to be glib," said Reimer. "You just have to care" (*Spiritual Life*, summer).

**INSUFFICIENT FUNDS:** In 1948, the year of his bar mitzvah, Michael Walzer's parents took him to a Jewish fund-raising banquet. After an impassioned lecture by a guest speaker, pledge cards were distributed with the expectation that they would be filled out on the spot. The owner of one of the most prominent stores in town, who knew every family's financial status, reviewed the pledges. If he thought someone wasn't pledging enough, he'd

tear up the card and pass it back. The meaning of the Hebrew word *tzedakah* (charity or justice) suggests that giving is an act of both charity and justice, says Walzer. To not give what you're capable of giving to the poor is tantamount to taking something from them (*Foreign Affairs*, July/August).

**DOUBLE BELONGING:** The biblical figure of Orpah in the story of Ruth often gets a bad rap. Unlike Ruth, she turned her back on their mother-in-law Naomi and returned to her Moabite people; she did not cast her lot with the Israelites, her deceased husband's people. Some minority groups, however, see in Orpah a model, says Korean-American biblical scholar Uriah Y. Kim. Orpah refused to turn her back on her people and her own cultural heritage for the sake of blending in with another people and culture. Nevertheless, Orpah had been faithful to her Israelite husband and mother-in-law. Kim likes to think that Orpah continued to demonstrate faithfulness to the God of the Israelites (*Interpretation*, July).

## FERVENT PRAYER:

When Congress was bogged down in the debate over raising the debt ceiling, the chaplain of the Senate voiced the concerns of the nation in his daily prayers. Barry C. Black, a longtime navy chaplain and a Seventh-day Adventist minister, urged the Senate to reach a resolution to the stalemate, and his prayers became more intense as the debt deadline approached.

On one of the last days before an agreement was reached, Black prayed: "Faced with potentially disastrous consequences, give the members of this body the wisdom to work while it is day. For the night comes, when no one can work" (*Washington Post*, July 31).

**DAY THE MUSIC DIED:** The long tradition of English hymnody has nearly reached a point of extinction, says Anglican church organist Jeremy Nicholas. Until several decades ago, British schools began the day with an assembly or chapel in which hymns were sung. Due to multi-faith sensitivities, that practice has been disbanded, and most youth don't go to church. When couples plan their weddings, they haven't a clue what to sing and will ask Nicholas for suggestions. They totally miss his humor when he tells them what not to sing: "Fight the good fight," "O Jesus, I have promised to serve you till the end" and "Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways" (*Gramophone*, March).

**BYGONE BLUE LAWS:** Two of the most influential conservative lobbying groups are going head-to-head this fall in Pennsylvania over the legalization of hunting on Sunday. The Farm Bureau is defending one of the last remaining blue laws that forbids hunting of most game species on Sunday. Apart from citing the religious justification for the ban, Farm Bureau members claim that they want one day free of hunters traipsing across their property. Challenging that position is the Sunday Hunting Coalition, led by the National Rifle Association and the National Shooting Sports Foundation. The economic benefit of extending hunting to Sunday would be significant, they say.



"If you bring joy and enthusiasm to everything you do, people will think you're crazy."



Almost every other blue law has fallen in Pennsylvania (RNS).

**DOROTHY'S SECRET:** Dorothy Day, cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement, who is now being considered for canonization, apparently had an abortion early in her life. She was reluctant to talk about it because she didn't want to encourage other women to do what she had done. One woman told Day that she had had an abortion because she knew Day had had one. Even though she was opposed to abortion, Day's criticism of it was muted in light of her own experience (*America*, July 1).

**RAIN PRAYER:** Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin is calling Oklahomans to pray for rain. More than 40 percent of Oklahoma is experiencing an exceptional drought, the most severe category measured by climatologists. Seventy percent of Texas is also in the category of exceptional drought. Texas Governor Rick Perry issued a call for prayer in April. The drought in Texas is much worse now. Both Fallin and Perry are among the prominent politicians who are skeptical about the scientific evidence for human-caused climate change (*Ethics Daily*, July 21).

**SOUTH OF THE BORDER:** When Mitt Romney's father, George, was running for president in 1968, his eligibility for president was more of an issue than his religion. George was born in Mexico, where the Romney family moved for the freedom to practice their Mormon religion, including polygamy. Polygamy has long been abandoned, yet Romney relatives still live in northern Mexico, in precarious territory between two warring drug cartels. One of the Romney cousins in Mexico says: "We have a saying: When a Romney drowns, you look for the body upstream. They don't just flow with the current" (*Washington Post*, July 23).

**HISTORY ISN'T PAST:** Civil war historian James M. McPherson argues that the Civil War did more to shape America than the Revolutionary War. Two percent of the population was killed during that war. A comparable

**“Will it ever be possible for us to give up the memory of our wounds? We had better hope so, for all our sakes. And after the commemoration ceremonies are over would be a good time to begin.”**

— Author David Rieff, commenting on the ceremonies for the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of 9/11 (*Harper's*, August)

**“Counter to mainstream American culture, the church teaches that a society should be judged by how well it addresses the needs of its poor and vulnerable members. It demands a preferential option for the poor, not the Pentagon, when moral documents like the federal budget are prepared.”**

— Editorial in *America* cautioning Catholics in the debates over the economy against “American conceits” such as “the primacy of the individual and the free market and the inherent inefficiency of government” (August 1)

figure today would be 6 million Americans dead. The war reshaped the balance of power between the federal government and the states. The first 11 of 12 amendments to the Constitution put limits on the power of the federal government. After the Civil War six of the next seven amendments enhanced the power of Congress. The issues of that war are still with us, says McPherson, “matters of race and citizenship; regional rivalries; the relative powers and responsibilities of federal, state and local governments.” The symbolism of the Confederate flag can still arouse deep passions on both sides (*Wilson Quarterly*, summer).

**JOB CHANGE:** Typical mid-level college graduates today can expect to change employers 12 times over the course of a lifetime and change skill sets at least three times. By the time they reach 40, they will not be able to rely on the skills they learned in school. With so much fluidity in employment, loyalty between worker and employer will diminish. “Modern capitalism is turning everyone into a work migrant, and many into work exiles,” says sociologist Richard Sennett. Amid so much change, it will be difficult for people to have a sense of a coherent life (*Hedgehog Review*, summer).

## RATING GOD

Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.



52% Approve

40% Not sure

9% Disapprove

God's overall performance



50% Approve

37% Not sure

13% Disapprove

God's handling of natural disasters

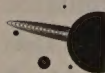


56% Approve

33% Not sure

11% Disapprove

God's handling of animals



71% Approve

24% Not sure

5% Disapprove

God's creation of the universe

A poll of American voters conducted mid-July by Public Policy Polling

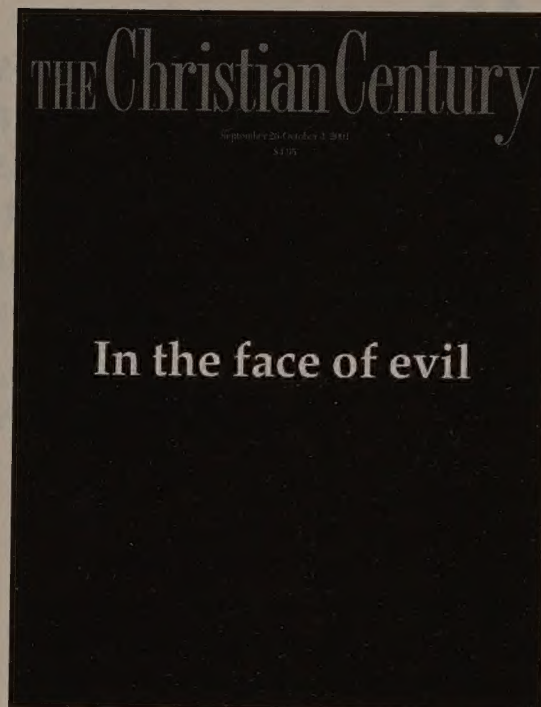


# 9/11: Ten years later

Many commentators said that the world changed for America on 9/11, that we “lost our innocence,” that we needed to find a “new normal” to accommodate our heightened sense of vulnerability. Some said we had woken from a slumber and that this attack would give us a new sense of clarity, focus and unity. Ten years later, I think the most significant change that occurred on 9/11 was that America became a victim, and since that day we have faced the moral hazards of negotiating that status.

The situation is particularly complex because America is not a powerless, voiceless or marginalized victim. We were (and are) the most powerful military force in the world. Thus it is not surprising that we quickly gave in to the temptation to mix a lethal cocktail of righteous anger and unbending power.

The moral challenge for the victim comes in the temptation to use one’s suffering as a shield to deflect moral questions, to say “never again” and to whisper



football, mosques are viewed with suspicion, Guantánamo Bay continues to operate, torture remains a political tool, and we are no closer to peace in the Middle East.

I recently had the opportunity to speak at an Islamic center in Toronto.

Jesus does not allow Christians to take refuge in the blank check of “whatever it takes.” We are called to test our own actions and maintain our own faithfulness, to notice the log in our own eye even when we have been wronged. This is not to blame the victim but rather to understand that the victim remains a moral agent and that the logic of “there is no alternative” only provides cover for those unwilling or unable to imagine alternatives. Ten years later, the church must offer and embody the alternatives that our political leaders have refused.

The church’s capacity to respond to an event like 9/11 is formed long before the event in all the small ways we learn to practice patience, love, kindness, compassion and forgiveness. It is these practices that we needed on 9/11 to give light in the dusty darkness, and it is these practices that we need ten years later to empower our witness for peace and reconciliation.

—*Scott Bader-Saye, a teacher at the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest and author of Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear*

## Ten years later, the church must offer and embody the alternatives that our political leaders have refused.

under one’s breath, “whatever it takes.” Victimhood becomes a kind of moral currency that justifies one’s actions in advance.

Vice President Dick Cheney gave voice to this logic a few days after the attacks, declaring that the U.S. had to “work the dark side,” using “any means at our disposal” and “without any discussion.” Ten years later, we continue to bear the bitter fruit of that decision: Muslims in the U.S. continue to face persecution, Shari’a has become a political

While there I met some family members of Omar Khadr. Khadr is a Canadian citizen who has spent the last nine years in Guantánamo Bay after being arrested in Afghanistan at age 15. Rather than being treated as the child soldier he was, Khadr was labeled an “enemy combatant,” opening the way to nine years (and counting) of incarceration, humiliation and torture. One might think that Christians would, at a minimum, speak out against the torture of children. Yet our voices have been largely silent.

Several members of my Manhattan congregation are involved in the National 9/11 Memorial project at Ground Zero. One is a subcontractor who has worked on the memorial’s concrete foundations, and he took me on a tour of the uncompleted memorial last spring. When it opens on the tenth anniversary of the attack, visitors will find it to be Olympian in scale: two pools covering an acre each—roughly the footprint of the twin towers—into which four-sided waterfalls cascade 30 feet, with the museum wedged between the pools; a forest of trees, including the lone survivor tree; and 2,983 names etched in stone.



Another church member working on the memorial came through the greeting line after church not long after my tour and gave me a rubber wristband that reads “9/11 Memorial—United by Hope.” I have been wearing it, and plan to do so till after church on Sunday, September 11. I think the three words on my bracelet will serve well to direct how we shape worship that day: *memorial, united, hope*.

Memorials help us remember, of course. They help us remember lives cut short and acts of extraordinary courage. Water falling inward cannot but call to mind collapsing buildings and tears. At church we’ll set our remembering in the context of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. We may toll the steeple bell. I’ll avoid the vocabularies of both victimhood and martyrdom. The former confers too small a status on those who died; the latter carries overtones of both religious conflict and intentionality. Heroic language does fit, however, especially in remembering the 400 first responders who gave their lives. They had choices to make, and they chose bravely.

Human beings are united by a great many things, many of them perverse. People are united by race and language, sect and geography; too often they are united by hatred and anger. To be united by hope would be exceptional. The 9/11 memorial seeks to recall the spirit of exceptional unity in the nation and world in the days just after 9/11—not wistfully, but in a way that dares to hope that such a spirit is ever a possibility. Our Sunday morning service that day will bear witness to what a member who serves on the memorial staff calls “our collective capacity to come together.”

Water, especially but not uniquely for Christians, bespeaks hope. Like God, it washes clean and refreshes. I will aim for hope, even more than remembering and unity, to be the governing word for our service this September 11. Brick Church will have a 9/11 fragment on display in our narthex that day, on loan from a museum downtown. It’s a grim piece of twisted I-beam, oddly mounted on a pedestal as if it were art. Like many of these memorial fragments, it has “SAVE” spray painted on it, a message

to salvage crews that carries deeper meaning than any construction worker intended.

—**Michael Lindvall**, pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York; his books include *The Good News from North Haven*

After watching from our 16th-floor windows as both towers lit up, then fell into a cloud of smoke, we gathered in the chapel of the Interchurch Center in Morningside Heights to pray. Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset has said, “History happens when the sensitive crown of the human heart inclines to one side or the other of the horizon.” I heard the American heart incline and new history unfold as

## After 9/11, I saw a church lift its voice in lament and turn its face toward the poor.

the chapel rang out with the precious names of loved ones downtown. In the speaking of the names I heard the sensitive crown of the human heart incline from security to insecurity; from entitlement to vulnerability; from the veneer of secularity (disenchantment) to a yearning to speak to our Maker; from insularity to fleeting solidarity.

In those moments, the Bible became very relevant because it talks to us about the horizon facing all of us: death. People’s spiritual DNA (Augustine: The soul was made for God and will never find its rest until it rests in God) moved them to gather, to pray, to go deep in their wrestling with God. As a chaplain anointed with oil some of the firefighters who rushed into the burning towers, there was the sense that we were baptized for this moment, that our lives mattered. Our hearts were broken, but they were broken open.

Before the events of 9/11, Salaam Arabic Lutheran Church in Brooklyn had been involved in organizing a community response to violence between Jewish and Arab kids. After the attacks, it

became a safe haven for Arab families fearing a backlash against them. After the attacks, pastors became a healing presence in firehouses for those who were beleaguered and grieving.

A program called Project Life sought to help the economic victims of September 11. As is often the case, those made bereft had already been among the most vulnerable. Many were immigrants. The case managers for the program included a Jewish hip-hop musician, an Arab Muslim arts major and an aspiring stand-up comedian. I watched the burgeoning of what today we would call an “emergent community.” The terms of engagement were a community that enabled them to make a difference in the lives of others, a community where their own narratives were shared and taken seriously and where

their work and struggle was recognized in ritual and reflection, a community infused by the Abrahamic narrative of faith.

I am more convinced than ever that a church in mission in these ways, a church that turns its face toward the poor and the stranger and to those hungry for a story and a vocation, a church that lifts up its voice in lament and that is rooted in community, will always be a church in renewal.

—**Stephen Paul Bouman**, executive director of *Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and author of *Grace All Around Us: Embracing God’s Promise in Tragedy and Loss*

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Americans were unified. We had all been attacked, and we knew what we were defending. References to Pearl Harbor sprang readily to mind. This was our moment to stand up and stand together.

Or so it seemed at the time. Ten years



later, the war on terror drags on, and we find ourselves in an era of partisanship and polarization. The historical analogies come not from our times of unity but from the decades when we were most divided against ourselves—the sectional rivalries before the Civil War or the conflicts of race, class and ethnicity that marked the end of the Gilded Age. Compromise starts to seem impossible, because we are not sure that there are any shared goals that we might approach by different methods. Every policy decision takes on the dimensions of an ultimate choice between good and evil.

There were early warning signs after

9/11—are now seen largely as rhetorical flourishes.

We do not understand our ideals clearly enough to argue about how to implement them, so we argue about whether we are secure and what we can afford. Since we are not sure about where to locate security in relation to our other values or what larger goals economic efficiency is supposed to serve, it is hardly surprising that the arguments do not take us very far together.

Like an individual suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder, we may be collectively unable to see what is happening to us. Americans responded well to the initial shock of 9/11 with a reaffir-

In settings of violent conflict, peace-building inhabits a liminal existence—it is the carving of a home for people whose lives are defined and held together by enmity. Peace-building chooses to build relationships and trust where pain and hatred run deep. The violent acts of fall 2001 challenged the very core of this vocation: How do we pursue justice and love those who wish us harm?

In the decade following 9/11, the U.S. entered the slippery but well-justified pathway of fear in the search for security. We were increasingly presented with a world divided between “us” and “them.” This was particularly true of how we understood and engaged the Muslim world, at home and abroad. We spent our national wealth on war and on isolating our enemies.

If 9/11 changed anything for me, it was to lead me back to the essence of peace-building. The profound truth of Jesus’ life came home in the form of his simplest yet most radical act: befriending the enemy. To his disciples’ consternation, Jesus ate with his enemies and he went to their houses. None of this implied that he changed his fundamental beliefs or values. It implied, rather, that he wanted to build relationships with those deemed untouchable and a threat. He chose love over fear, engagement over isolation and separation.

What endures since 9/11 is the need to build relationships across our perceived divisions with those who see the world differently and with those whom we may most fear. This is the work I have engaged in at Eastern Mennonite University and at Notre Dame. Hundreds of Muslim brothers and sisters have participated in the Summer Peacebuilding Institute at EMU and the recently launched Contending Modernities research project at Notre Dame, which provides a platform for building understanding and constructive change between the world’s two largest religious bodies, Roman Catholicism and Islam. The path of love starts with the simple yet unexpected act of engagement and befriending.

—**John Paul Lederach**, professor of international peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame and author of *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*

## We now are less clear about who we are and less able to envision a common future than we were before.

9/11 that this might be where we were headed. Fears provoked by the background of the hijackers spilled over into ethnic profiling, a general suspicion of immigrants and aggressive expressions of Christian nationalism. It was confusing to watch military operations targeted against a terrorist network and its individual leaders, rather than against another state. We were not sure who the enemy was or how we would know when the war was finished, and the early assurances that this was not a war against Islam did not always hold up against the crusading rhetoric that takes over precisely when we are not quite sure what we are doing.

The result over the intervening decade has been a narrowing of our public discourse. The urgent need to strengthen public security and be on the lookout for domestic terrorism combined with the recession that followed the 9/11 attacks to focus our politics on questions of security and economic efficiency, and the arguments have remained confined within those limits ever since. Appeals to democracy and freedom, to the openness of American society, to diversity and to human dignity—all of which were prominent immediately after

mation of our unity and our most important values. But fear and uncertainty have taken their toll. Ten years later, we find ourselves less clear about who we are and less able to envision a common future than we were before.

—**Robin Lovin**, professor of ethics at Southern Methodist University, who recently wrote *Christian Realism and the New Realities*

Inescapably, September 11, 2001, brought up a question brewing under the surface of my faith and profession: How do we transform enmities? The faith I embrace and the nonviolent transformation I am professionally committed to seeking both arise from the life and teachings of Jesus, who measures love in terms of how we respond to those who wish us harm.

The brutal events of 9/11 brought life and work to a standstill. Wherever we were, we stopped and watched, staggered. I felt a mix of deep sadness and anger beyond words. To paraphrase W. B. Yeats, the center broke. The central tenets of my faith and vocation seemed uprooted, naked and irrelevant to the rising impulse toward seeking an adequate response.



## Unplugged at church camp

# Tech detox

by Andrew Scott

WITH OVER 360 acres of lush terrain, a lake, an outdoor chapel, a large community garden, a zip-line and a high ropes course, Chestnut Ridge Camp in North Carolina offers activities that engage summer campers with nature, with God and with each other.

But please, if you come, leave your cell phone at home.

As youth become more and more attached to their cell phones and digital music players and to mobile devices that allow Internet access virtually anywhere, Christian camps are grappling with how to resist the power and presence of this technology. For many camp directors and staff, the problem is not the technology itself but the culture of multitasking and instant communication that makes it hard for campers to pay attention to what is happening at camp and to be fully present with one another.

Rhonda Parker, director at the United Methodist camp since 2001, says campers are inundated with technology.

"We ask people to be fully present at camp," she said. "There has been a cultural shift, and campers have shorter attention spans." They assume that "they should always be entertained."

Chestnut Ridge focuses its mission on "Food, Faith and Farming." Parker has structured the camp around the idea that delayed gratification is a good thing.

"Living life is so much better than watching it," Parker said. "To be attentive to the world takes time, and that can't be cultivated by looking at a two-by-three-inch screen."

Yet Parker understands that camp counselors will continue to text and e-mail while on staff. She said that while most of the staff are able to be unplugged while they are working with campers, nearly all

look forward to checking Facebook pages, e-mail and text messages at some point during the day.

Camp Don Lee, sister camp to Chestnut Ridge and one of three United Methodist camps in North Carolina, gives campers a short period each day for using cell phones. Don Lee is situated on the coast of North Carolina and specializes in sailing instruction.

Hannah Terry, who worked as a chaplain at Don Lee last summer, said she did not notice much difference between campers who had cell phones and those who didn't, since phones were allowed to be used for only 45 minutes each evening.

Sarah Brown, who attended Chestnut Ridge as a camper and is now a counselor, said that the majority of counselors understand why cell phones and other media are prohibited.

David Berkey, director of Camp and Retreat Ministries for the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, said that the general rule for United Methodist camps is that cell phones and social media should not be used to let nervous parents keep in touch with their kids.

Berkey said there has been a lot of conversation among camp directors about the role of technology. He said one of the biggest benefits of being disconnected from digital devices is the opportunity to create new connections with nature, with God and with other people. The resistance, he says, comes from families who want to communicate continually with their children.

"Personally, I think it's possible to say no to cell phones for a week and have kids adhere to it," he said. "Yet for some campers it's like losing their right arm to lose their cell phone."

Kent Busman, director of Camp Fowl-

**OFF DUTY, ONLINE:** Counselors at Chestnut Ridge Camp use their free time to check e-mail.

er in Schenectady, New York, is adamant about resisting technology. "Head, heart, body and soul are all in one place at camp," he said. "That provides a unique experience of community."

"Technology is an addiction, and there is something good about the isolation of a wilderness experience," Busman said. "Camp is the last place where kids can reclaim an intentional space of connection, and it's almost a revolutionary idea."

Samantha Miller, a counselor who has worked at Fowler for several years, says she confiscates about ten iPods a week from campers of high school age.

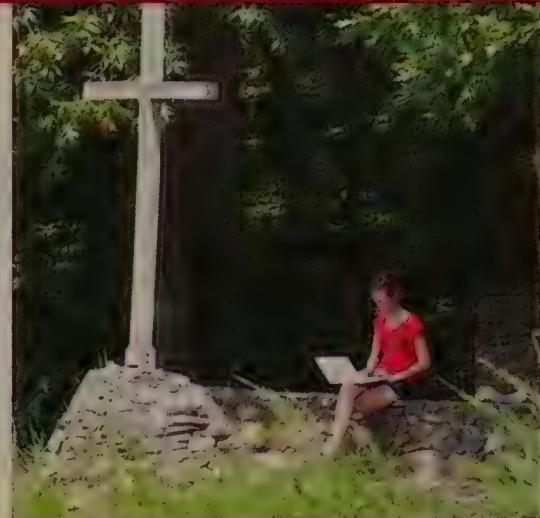
To meet the need of parents to stay connected to their children, Fowler posts daily pictures of camp activities with explanations of the day's events.

David Peet, director of the Luther Dell Bible Camp in Remer, Minnesota, said he finds that campers are at a loss without something in their hands telling them what to do. Luther Dell is part of the Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp, a network of camps in Minnesota and Wisconsin that doesn't have cell service. It offers "a place of stillness and serenity."

Peet recognizes the symptoms of technology withdrawal, especially in his counselors. While most counselors comply with the policy that forbids Internet use while on duty, Peet says most of them spend their off-hours online.

"There is a longing to be plugged in," he said.

*Andrew Scott, a student at Duke Divinity School, worked last summer as a chaplain at Chestnut Ridge Camp.*



COURTESY ANDREW SCOTT



## Right-wing extremist or Christian terrorist?

**T**he mass murders in Oslo have raised a host of agonizing questions, but few have such an ancient lineage and contemporary resonance as whether Anders Behring Breivik, the right-wing extremist behind the attacks that killed 76 Norwegians on July 22, is a Christian.

Breivik has claimed in various forums that he is a Christian but most explicitly and in greatest detail in the 1,500-page manifesto he compiled over several months and posted on the Internet.

"At the age of 15 I chose to be baptized and confirmed in the Norwegian State Church," the 32-year-old Breivik wrote. "I consider myself to be 100 percent Christian." But he also fiercely disagrees with the politics of most Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

"Regarding my personal relationship with God, I guess I'm not an excessively religious man," he writes. "I am first and foremost a man of logic. However, I am a supporter of a monocultural Christian Europe."

Breivik fashions himself a "cultural Christian" and a modern-day crusader in a resurrected order of the medieval Knights Templar, riding out to do battle against squishy "multiculturalism" and the onslaught of "Islamization"—and to suffer the glory of Christian martyrdom in the process.

Mark Juergensmeyer, author of *Terror in the Mind of God*, noted close parallels between Breivik and Timothy McVeigh, the antigovernment radical behind the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. "If [Osama] bin Laden is a Muslim terrorist, Breivik and McVeigh are surely Christian ones," Juergensmeyer, a professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, wrote on the blog Religion Dispatches.

Not surprisingly, conservative pundits who share some of Breivik's views and also consider themselves Christians quickly sought to distance themselves from Breivik by declaring, as Bill O'Reilly did on Fox News, that "Breivik is not a Christian."

"That's impossible," O'Reilly said July 26. "No one believing in Jesus commits mass murder. The man might have called himself a Christian on the Net, but he is certainly not of that faith." O'Reilly blamed the "liberal media" for "pushing the Christian angle" in order to demean Christians like himself.

O'Reilly's point was taken up by any number of commentators and religion scholars.

Mathew N. Schmalz, a professor of religious studies at the College of the Holy Cross, wrote in a *Washington Post* column that Breivik's vision "is a Christianity without Christ" because the attacker rejects a personal relationship with Jesus.

Writing in the *Guardian*, Andrew Brown reasoned that "even in his saner moments [Breivik's] ideology had nothing to do with Christianity but was based on an atavistic horror of Muslims and a loathing of 'Marxists,' by which he meant anyone to the left of Genghis Khan."

Arne H. Fjeldstad, a longtime Norwegian journalist and Lutheran minister of the Church of Norway, wrote a lengthy analysis of Breivik's references to Christianity and also concluded that "his view is framed entirely by politics, with strong political and cultural opinions, which also include religious views." Fjeldstad added: "Breivik's religious position is rather distant from any Christian faith commitment."

Others pushed back against such a carefully cordoned-off interpretation of Breivik's faith, or of Christianity itself. "If he did what he has alleged to have done, Anders Breivik is a Christian ter-

## Tveit urges effort for common values, respect

**SHAKEN AND** saddened in the aftermath of the bomb attack and mass killings in his native Norway, Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, said a "huge task" lies ahead for churches and other faiths. "We must work together to find common values, ways to respect one another and . . . ways to live together without violence."

The terror and killings inflicted by Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian national, carried "a cruel irony," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesperson Melissa Fleming. "A country renowned for its impartiality,

tolerance and devotion to peace, symbolized by its being home to the Nobel Peace Prize, has been subjected to such a brutal attack."

The oil- and gas-rich Nordic country of nearly 5 million people has welcomed hundreds of thousands of immigrants from around the world, taking in refugees from conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territories, Somalia and Libya.

Commented Tveit: "Now we know the reality of so many others in the world where violence pierces the lives of the innocent." —ENInews



rorist,” Boston University religion scholar Stephen Prothero wrote on CNN.com.

“Yes, he twisted the Christian tradition in directions most Christians would not countenance. But he rooted his hate and his terrorism in Christian thought and Christian history, particularly the history of the medieval Crusades against Muslims, and current efforts to renew that clash,” said Prothero. “So Christians have a responsibility to speak out forcefully against him, and to look hard at the resources in the Christian tradition that can be used to such murderous ends.”

Popular blogger Andrew Sullivan, a Catholic, also expounded on that point, writing that “it is obvious that Christians can commit murder, assault, etc. They do so every day. Because, as Christian orthodoxy tells us, we are all sinners.

“To say that no Christian can ever commit murder is a sophist’s piffle. . . . Do the countless criminals who have gone to church or believe in Jesus immediately not count as Christians the minute they commit the crime? Of course not.”

Sullivan said O’Reilly’s argument “is complete heresy in terms of the most basic Christian orthodoxy.” And Sullivan is right, though for some 2,000 years Christians have continually battled fiercely over who is a “real” Christian and who is not, or who is a “good” Christian and who is a “bad” Christian.

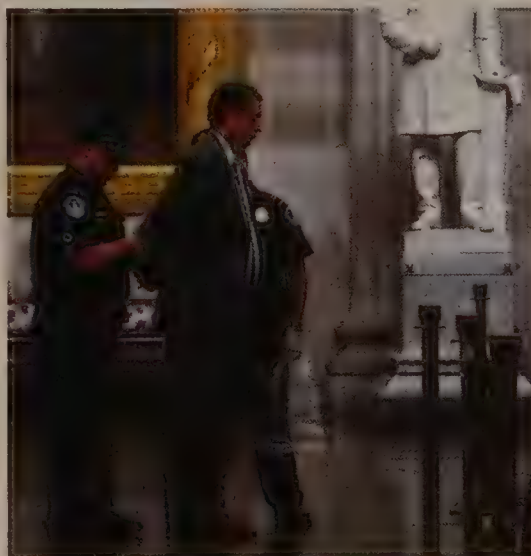
Many argue today that President Obama, for example, can’t be a true Christian despite his profession of faith because of the liberal policies he proposes. Or that Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan, a Tea Party favorite, can’t be a real Catholic because he embraces the atheistic libertarianism of Ayn Rand in opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Anders Breivik may be a bad Christian, perhaps the worst one can imagine, as well as a confused man who cherry-picked from scripture and history to justify his unchristian form of Christianity. But countless numbers of religion experts have observed that proof-texting the Bible and using faith to rationalize one’s favorite political and cultural views is something that most believers—Jewish, Muslim and Christian—are guilty of at one time or another. So kicking Breivik out of Christianity in the end might be an ominous sign for all Christians. —David Gibson, RNS

## Demonstrators for poor arrested inside Capitol

Making pleas to Washington to avoid drastic spending cuts that would hit the poor and most vulnerable hardest, main-line Protestant leaders, Catholic bishops, progressive evangelicals and other faith leaders tried petitions, joint statements and meetings with lawmakers as the budget deficit deadline approached.

On July 28, several days before the default deadline, some advocates reverted to a modest act of civil disobedience. Eleven protesters, who sat in a circle singing songs and praying inside the Capitol Rotunda and who for an hour refused to disperse, were arrested by police.



**WASHINGTON BUDGET PROTEST:** *Jim Winkler, top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, was among the 11 arrested at a sit-in at the Capitol Rotunda.*

The 11 included organizer Bob Edgar, a former general secretary of the National Council of Churches and now president of Common Cause. Another was Michael Livingston, director of the NCC’s poverty initiative, who lamented that Congress was paralyzed by “toxic partisan politics [and] protecting corporations and wealthy individuals while shredding the safety net for millions.”

Jim Winkler, who heads the UMC’s social action agency, told the United Methodist News Service, “We felt that we needed to do something dramatic to

illustrate that people of faith want this crisis resolved.”

Even as Congress and the White House appeared to avert the immediate debt crisis, Winkler—a veteran administrator in Washington—says he advises church members that lawmakers pay attention to phone calls, e-mails and letters they get daily. “They are scared to death of running into a firestorm or an uprising from people back home,” he said.

## Bloggers buzz over Murdoch as ‘Bible mogul’

The scandal involving Rupert Murdoch’s British tabloid empire brought scrutiny to, of all places, western Michigan and the Zondervan publishing company.

Among the major holdings in Murdoch’s News Corporation is publisher HarperCollins, which owns Zondervan, the Christian publishing giant known for prominent Christian authors and best-selling editions of the New International Version Bible.

Murdoch’s Bible connections set the blogosphere abuzz. The Zondervan connection to the still-unfolding scandal was first pointed out by Will Braun, former editor of *Geez* magazine, on his Holy Moly blog, where he described the 80-year-old Murdoch as a “Bible mogul.”

Or, as *USA Today*’s Faith & Reason blog put it, “Would you buy a Bible from Rupert Murdoch . . . ? You probably already have.” Zondervan, formed in 1931 in Grand Rapids, has become the nation’s largest Bible publisher. HarperCollins bought the company in 1988.

Murdoch is best known in the U.S. as the tycoon who owns media properties such as Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal*. Murdoch was forced to close one of his British tabloids, *News of the World*, following allegations that its reporters had hacked the phone accounts of thousands of people, including victims of violent crime and terrorism, families of dead soldiers, and politicians and various celebrities.

The controversy has rattled British institutions, resulted in several high-profile arrests and resignations and





**WIDE-RANGING EMPIRE:** Media mogul Rupert Murdoch heads News Corporation, which owns HarperCollins publishers and the Christian publishing company Zondervan.

thrown the country's tabloid media culture into harsh focus. In his blog post, Braun highlighted some ethical issues the Murdoch connection raises for writers who work with Zondervan:

"For those of us who care about the Christian scriptures, what are we to make of this mix of billionaire media tycoonery, allegations of phone hacking and bribery, and the Holy Word of God?" he asked. "What are we to make of the fact that every time we buy a Zondervan product we contribute to Murdoch's mogul-dom, which includes a personal fortune that Forbes pegged at \$6.3 billion last year?"

Braun interviewed Christian author Shane Claiborne, who has published books with Zondervan, about the potential ethical conflict and whether it would affect his future with the company. Claiborne said he has mixed feelings but would likely continue working with Zondervan as long as he could "protect the integrity of the message."

"I don't think that the world exists in 100 percent pure and 100 percent impure options," Claiborne said.

Zondervan spokeswoman Tara Powers told *Christianity Today* that the Murdoch scandal "does not present an ethical dilemma for Zondervan," and she said she was unaware that any of its authors had serious concerns.

To the *Grand Rapids Press*, Powers said: "Throughout our 80-year history as a leading Christian publisher, Zondervan has always operated with autonomy, editorial independence, and the freedom to fulfill our mission to meet the needs of

people with resources that glorify Jesus Christ and promote biblical principles."

Jeff Jarvis, author of *What Would Google Do?*, said he had been scheduled to publish his next book, *Public Parts*, with HarperCollins but pulled it and found a different publisher.

Evangelical scion Frank Schaeffer, whose father Francis Schaeffer was a fundamentalist figure of the 1970s, has called on Rick Warren, Rob Bell and other prominent Christian writers who have published with Zondervan/HarperCollins to stop doing business with the company and thus enriching "this dreadful man." —Troy Riemink, RNS

## Consumers mobilize in culture wars

When you buy a pair of shoes, a spicy chicken sandwich or a gym membership, does that mean you endorse everything about the company you are dealing with—including the CEO's religious beliefs?

It's a question that has long plagued socially conscious consumers. Websites like Change.org are mobilizing grassroots campaigns against companies like Curves fitness centers, whose CEO donates millions to antiabortion groups, and Chick-fil-A, a fast-food chain that supports faith-based groups opposed to same-sex relationships.

While protests haven't stopped those corporate leaders from supporting conservative Christian agendas, the head of TOMS Shoes has felt compelled to apologize for an interview with Focus on the Family president Jim Daly.

Blake Mycoskie, 34, an evangelical Christian, founded TOMS in 2006, promising that every pair of shoes would be made with fair labor and that TOMS would provide a second pair for a needy child. The for-profit California-based company, which has given away more than a million pairs of shoes, is popular on the West Coast, particularly with young adults attracted to no-frills fashions and social justice activities.

After gay rights and feminist groups criticized Mycoskie and customers threatened a boycott, the CEO apolo-

gized July 9: "Had I known the full extent of Focus on the Family's beliefs, I would not have accepted the invitation to speak at their event," he wrote on his Start Something That Matters blog.

Comments on his blog and Facebook page expressed doubt that Mycoskie was ignorant of Focus's activism against homosexuality, especially since some had warned him when the event was first advertised.

"We approached TOMS because Blake attracts a certain audience and because his story is inspirational," said Gary Schneeberger, a Focus spokesman.

Mycoskie says his faith has inspired his business, but the TOMS website proclaims that the company is nonpolitical and nonreligious.

Companies and their leaders are free to support religious or political causes, said Chris MacDonald, a business ethicist affiliated with Duke University's Kenan Institute for Ethics, but consumers should take such actions into account.

"If you have a sense that your money is somehow, even indirectly, contributing to a cause that you find morally problematic, then it seems somewhere between reasonable and obligatory for you to vote with your dollars," he said. "Your individual purchasing decision isn't doing a lot to further the cause of the company's CEO—maybe just a few pennies—but there's also symbolic value, and you're responsible for that."

In the past, consumer complaints over gay issues were more likely to come from conservative Christian groups, with organizations like the American Family Association objecting to the corporate policies of companies like Walgreens, Walmart and Proctor & Gamble.

Gay rights petitions have achieved some limited success in the past year: Apple pulled apps for conservative groups like Exodus International and the Manhattan Declaration from its iTunes store, and Chick-fil-A's president issued a statement saying that "while my family and I believe in the biblical definition of marriage, we love and respect anyone who disagrees."

At the same time, left-wing protests against Whole Foods, whose CEO came out against health-care reform two years ago, haven't had a noticeable impact on the supermarket chain. —Nicole Neroulis, RNS



## Liberal theologian, mentor Gordon Kaufman dies at 86

A member of the Harvard Divinity School faculty for more than three decades, Gordon Kaufman, who died July 22 at 86, had a profound influence on rethinking theology in naturalistic terms, arguing for a vision of God as the “profound mystery of creativity,” according to his colleagues. He died at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

A prolific author and essayist, Kaufman was admired especially for his 1993 book *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*. In a review for the *CENTURY*, William C. Placher called it “his best book, tying together a lifetime of theological reflection. . . . An admirable model of how to be a theologian.”

Another reviewer, Alan Race, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, noted Kaufman’s “refreshing candor” in confronting traditional systematic thinking. Kaufman’s invitation to build a theology from many voices and perspectives “rescues the theological task from the defensive postures it has adopted ever since the rise of the critical method.”

Kaufman was president of the American Theological Society for one year before holding the same post for the large American Academy of Religion 1981–1982.

“At the core of Gordon’s theological imagination of God as mystery and creativity was his deep commitment to non-violence, justice and human flourishing,” said Karen King, Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School, who also recalled “his fundamental sense of joy and duty in connection to all living things.”

George Rupp, a former dean at Harvard and ex-president of Columbia University, called Kaufman “an exceptional teacher, mentor, colleague and friend.” Kaufman retired in 1995 but taught part-time and mentored students up to 2009.

A Mennonite who was a conscientious objector during World War II, Kaufman earned his undergraduate degree at Bethel (Kansas) College in

1947, then went on to Northwestern and Yale for graduate degrees. In 1953 he was ordained in the General Conference Mennonite Church.

Before joining the Harvard faculty, Kaufman taught at Pomona College, then at Vanderbilt University. He held numerous postdoctoral fellowships and visiting professorships abroad.

Feminist pioneer Francis Schüssler Fiorenza said Kaufman insisted that “Christian beliefs should be understood in ways that contribute to global issues of peace, to dialogue among the religions, and to environmental concerns.”

Among his early books were *God the Problem* (1972) and *Nonresistance and Responsibility, and Other Mennonite Essays* (1979). His latest were *In the Beginning . . . Creativity* (2004) and *Jesus and Creativity* (2006) in which he suggested—according to a Harvard Divinity School news release—that God is the “profound mystery of creativity,” the “ongoing creativity in the universe.” —John Dart

## John Stott, 90, was major shaper of evangelicalism

John Stott, a renowned and prolific author credited with shaping 20th-century evangelical Christianity, died July 27 in England at age 90. While not a household name like evangelist Billy Graham, Stott was considered nearly as influential.

He wrote more than 50 books, crafted the Lausanne Covenant—a definitive statement that unified evangelicals worldwide—and supported numerous Christian scholars through his organization.

If evangelicals elected popes, they would have chosen Stott, the scholar Michael Cromartie once quipped.

Graham, who worked with Stott on the 1974 global Lausanne conference that led to the covenant, said: “The

evangelical world has lost one of its greatest spokesmen, and I have lost one of my close personal friends and advisers.”

Stott was a mentor to many evangelicals, from up-and-coming pastors to organization leaders. California megachurch pastor Rick Warren tweeted on July 27 about Stott’s mentoring role in his life. “I flew to the UK recently just to pray for him and sit by his bed,” Warren wrote. “What a giant!”

Stott, a disciplined man known to read the entire Bible annually for more than 50 years, declined the opportunity to become an Anglican bishop. Instead, he became known as “Uncle John” to many in the evangelical circles he traveled.

“Uncle John was a great influence in my own theological development,” said Geoff Tunncliffe, general secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance. “His commitment to biblical orthodoxy, global mission and unity in the body of Christ were foundational in my own spiritual journey.”

Stott’s books include *Basic Christianity*, which David Neff, editor-in-chief of *Christianity Today*, said rivals C. S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*, as well as *The Cross of Christ* and *Christian Mission in the Modern World*.

In his writing and speeches, Stott emphasized the joint need for Christian evangelism and social action. Though known primarily for his written word, Stott also was hailed as a longtime

Anglican preacher, serving as rector of All Souls Church in London for 25 years and as rector emeritus from 1975 until the time of his death.

When S. Douglas Birdsell, executive chair of the Lausanne Movement, informed Lausanne leaders that Stott had died, he spoke of his colleague’s multiple passions. “John Stott’s focus was the cross,” he wrote. “The

church was his great love. World evangelization was his passion. Scripture was his authority. Heaven was his hope. Now it is his home.” —Adelle M. Banks, RNS



John Stott



## Kenya promises to expand refugee camp

The Kenyan government has promised to expand a refugee camp for thousands of desperate Somalis fleeing a drought crisis in the Horn of Africa, and faith groups and humanitarian agencies are praising the move.

The Lutheran World Federation “welcomes the decision as a vital life-saving measure, especially in view of the current high influx of Somali refugees fleeing drought and insecurity at home,” LWF general secretary Martin Junge said in a July 18 letter to Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga.

The LWF, which manages the camp for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, is working with other agencies to provide food and water for the refugees, many of whom are starving children. The UN describes it as the world’s most dire humanitarian emergency.

The camp, called Ifo II, is an extension of the Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya, which now holds nearly 500,000 Somalis and has become the world’s largest refugee camp. Ifo II has been standing empty, complete with new water tanks, lavatories and health-care facilities.

After touring Dadaab on July 14, Odinga announced that the government would allow settlement within ten days as a humanitarian gesture. The region’s drought is viewed as the worst in the last 60 years. An estimated 10 million people in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia face starvation and malnutrition.

“Since the camp is already there, I think the decision to open it is a good one. I welcome it,” said Catholic bishop Giorgio Bertin of Djibouti, the apostolic administrator of Mogadishu. “It will not solve the problem in southern Somalia, but surely human lives will be saved,” added Bertin, who is also the president of Caritas Somalia, a Catholic aid agency.

António Guterres, who heads the UN’s refugee agency, in a statement from his Geneva office applauded the opening and promised his organization’s full support to the government. He said the expansion effort will ease overcrowding at the camp. —EN/news

## Disciples reelect Watkins to second term

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ) has reelected Sharon Watkins as head of the denomination, capping off a weeklong assembly that mixed mundane church business with hot-button issues such as homosexuality, immigration and anti-Muslim hate speech.

Watkins, who had completed one six-year term as general minister and president, spoke before the vote, reflecting on her previous leadership and laying out a vision for the future of the church as it struggles with internal debates.

“We need to talk honestly about the gospel message as it relates to race and sexual orientation in our church,” she said. “We’ve been at a stalemate for too long.” The Indianapolis-based Disciples

denomination, a frequent ecumenical collaborator with the United Church of Christ, has about 700,000 members nationwide.

During the July 9–13 assembly in Nashville, Tennessee, church delegates passed several resolutions, including an overture denouncing anti-Muslim hate speech. “[The church] condemns anti-Muslim speech and activity and calls upon the church to promote respect, civility and love toward our Muslim neighbors,” the resolution reads.

During the assembly, Watkins led an evening prayer vigil in the streets of Nashville for immigration reform. “Emergent” author and activist Brian McLaren urged Disciples to be forward-thinking and not “consumed by the unclean spirit of nostalgia.” —RNS

## Campus Crusade switches its name to ‘Cru’

Campus Crusade for Christ is out. “Cru” is in. The 60-year-old evangelical ministry recently announced its new name, saying the old name had become problematic.

“We’ve been having issues with two words in the name—*campus* and *crusade*,” said Steve Sellers, a vice president who oversees the ministry’s U.S. operations, in an interview. The change was announced at a staff conference July 19 in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Though the Florida-based organization began on campuses in 1951, it expanded to some two dozen ministries focused on topics such as families, athletes, the military and inner cities.

When Campus Crusade was founded by the late Bill Bright and his wife, Vonette, the word *crusade* typically referred to the stadium-sized events held by evangelists like Billy Graham.

“In today’s culture it carries more weight in terms of its historic meaning,” Sellers said, with people thinking “more to the days of the Crusaders and dealing

with the Middle East as opposed to a positive use of the word.”

Cru isn’t the only religious organization that has moved away from *crusade*. Wheaton College, Graham’s alma mater in Illinois, changed its mascot from Crusaders to Thunder in 2000. Graham’s son Franklin leads “festivals” instead of crusades, and his grandson Will holds “celebrations.” Most recently, Crusader Lutheran Church in Rockville, Maryland, changed its name to Living Faith Lutheran Church out of concern that the old name had “militaristic” and “non-Christian” overtones.

Sellers said the Crusade-to-Cru change is part of that trend. “We don’t want the words that we use to get in the way of the message that we have,” he said. In a Frequently Asked Questions feature on its website, the ministry explained why leaders also opted to take the word *Christ* out of its title.

“Cru enables us to have discussions about Christ with people who might initially be turned off by a more overtly Christian name,” the response read.

Sellers said the name of the umbrella organization, Campus Crusade for Christ International, will still be used. —Adelle M. Banks, RNS



## What's behind renewed China-Vatican friction?

When China's state-run Catholic Church ordained a new bishop for the Diocese of Shantou this summer without the Vatican's approval, it represented the latest step back from years of progress in a complex relationship. Yet the main causes for the shift may have little to do with Rome, experts say, and instead lie in momentous geopolitical events in other regions of the globe—and deep social changes within China itself.

For more than half a century, China's 12 million to 15 million Catholics have been divided between the officially approved Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA) and an underground church of Catholics loyal to the pope. Each side fiercely rejects the other's legitimacy.

But in recent years, the Vatican and Beijing have been engaged in a slow and gradual process of compromise and mutual accommodation. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI wrote an open letter to Chinese Catholics insisting that the church be free of state control but said the Vatican would like diplomatic ties with Beijing. He added that Rome is not seeking the overthrow of the communist regime.

The following year, in a widely reported gesture, the China Philharmonic Orchestra performed for Benedict at the Vatican in the presence of Beijing's ambassador to Italy.

Most significantly, China and the Vatican tacitly agreed on a policy of only ordaining bishops acceptable to both sides. Some 90 percent of those bishops previously ordained by the state church eventually received approval from Rome.

Over the past eight months, however, the rapprochement has halted, and Beijing has once again taken a hard line on control of the church in China.

Last November, Joseph Guo Jincai was ordained the bishop of Chengde without papal approval. In June, a CPCA spokesman said the state-run church planned to ordain more than 40 new bishops "without delay," a week before it ordained Paul Lei Shiyin as bishop of Leshan. According to the Vatican-affiliated AsiaNews agency,

Chinese officials first "kidnapped" three bishops loyal to Rome and forced them to participate in the ceremony that made Joseph Huang Bingzhang the bishop of Shantou.

So what changed that would explain Beijing's recent shift in policy? According to Bernardo Cervellera, director of AsiaNews, China's new hard line is a reflection of both strength and weakness. With its status as an economic superpower now indisputable, China no longer has to cultivate the good opinion of Western nations that are literally in its debt.

"There may have been a time before the [2008 Beijing] Olympics when China may have thought it needed the Vatican's approval for international respectability," Cervellera said, "but now it doesn't."

And despite its growing assertiveness abroad, Cervellera said, Beijing is increasingly anxious about unrest among its own people. Along with skyrocketing growth, China has wrestled with inequality, corruption and environmental damage. That makes the regime even more determined to defuse any potential source of organized resistance, including the Catholic Church.

According to Raquel Vaz-Pinto, a professor of international relations at the Catholic University of Portugal, Chinese leaders have especially keen memories of Poland in the 1980s, when Pope John Paul II inspired the Solidarity labor movement that toppled the communist regime and later decimated the Soviet Union.

Recent international events have acutely aggravated Beijing's fears, Vaz-Pinto noted. Last year's Nobel Peace Prize for dissident Chinese writer Liu Xiaobo came as a shock to Beijing, she said, prompting some of the strongest official propaganda since Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and '70s.

Within a month, she noted, the state church defied Rome with the ordination in Chengde. The timing wasn't a coincidence, Vaz-Pinto said, nor were two more ordinations that followed the Arab Spring pro-democracy movements in the Arab world, which brought down the longtime dictators of Tunisia and Egypt.

China's fear that the Arab movements could inspire dissidents on its own soil is evident in what Phelim Kine, senior Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch in

New York, called the "worst spike in repression in China since the aftermath" of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

Since last February, authorities have arrested an unknown number of activists, intellectuals and bloggers and heavily censored international news.

"The spillover effect of this is touching all sectors of society," Kine said, including the Catholic Church, whose underground clergy already have a long history of being imprisoned and tortured.

As a result, the Vatican seems to have lost faith in engagement and negotiation with Beijing, opting for an increasingly hard line of its own, even though its leverage is mostly verbal.

The Vatican has warned that all bishops who consecrate other bishops without a papal mandate incur automatic excommunication, as do the men they consecrate, unless they were "coerced" to participate in the ceremony. —Francis X. Rocca, RNS

## Deaths

■ **Howard Creecy**, a Baptist preacher chosen early this year as the new president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, died suddenly July 28 at the age of 57. His death means that the civil rights organization founded by Martin Luther King Jr. will go through another unexpected transition. Creecy became president after Bernice King, the founder's daughter, decided in January not to assume the presidency, citing a leadership clash. SCLC leaders expressed shock at Creecy's death of a suspected heart attack.

■ The Vatican's highest-ranking official in the U.S., Archbishop **Pietro Sambi**, died July 27 at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore, succumbing to complications from lung surgery performed a few weeks earlier. Sambi, 73, spent five years representing the Holy See's interests in Washington, helping Pope Benedict XVI reshape the American hierarchy through key appointments. The Italian-born Sambi was a career diplomat for the Vatican who served on five continents and in a number of delicate posts, including a stint as the Vatican's representative to Israel and Palestine.



# LIVING BY The Word

*Sunday, August 28*

*Exodus 3:1–15; Jeremiah 15:15–21; Romans 12:9–21;  
Matthew 16:21–28*

**THE LIFE OF MOSES** is so large and significant that it's hard to imagine that we have anything in common with him—until he opens his mouth. As soon as he starts to talk he sounds just like us. When he starts offering excuses, he's not saying anything that we haven't used as reasons for not surrendering our lives to God.

I identify with his reluctance. It took me a long time to feel comfortable with my calling as a pastor. I had to be more vulnerable, accessible and responsible than I'd been as an academic, and I wasn't sure I was up to it. This is what makes Moses' encounter with God important—we tend to counter everything God says to us with a quick excuse. When God called Moses, he responded with at least five excuses, all of which believers have stubbornly used throughout the centuries.

Moses began with the “wrong number” excuse. As soon as God called his name, Moses was ready to tell God to call another number. “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” A while ago our church administrator called a woman who answered the phone pleasantly. Before he had a chance to say anything, she said, “Hello, you've got the wrong number. If you dial 543-6789 you'll reach the person you want.” He responded, “OK, then if I call that number I'll be sure to reach Jane Smith?” “Oh,” she said, “I'm Jane Smith. It's just that I get so many wrong numbers I'm always prepared to give them what they need right away.”

Moses was sure that God had gotten the wrong number. What could God want from him? He was so concerned about his own little “I” that one wonders if he'd even heard the “I” statements of God that dominate this text. Did Moses honestly believe that he could avoid becoming involved in God's will by feigning anonymity? One feels like saying, “Excuse me! This isn't about you. It's about God and his people.”

When God calls us, God says, “I've seen the confusion of your family, the brokenness of your home. I want you to be a Christ-centered servant-leader in your family.” If we say, “Who, me?” God says, “Yes, you.” God never expected or wanted Moses to think he could do God's will on his own. “I will be with you” is God's answer to Moses and to us.

When in doubt we stall for time with the “let's talk about it” excuse. Moses illustrated a common trait among God's people when he said, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to

them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” This is an infamous delaying tactic. But God wasn't buying it. If ignorance was Moses' problem, God would give him wisdom; if Moses had questions, God had answers. “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” This is true for us as well. Our false humility is nothing but an excuse. God will give us what we need to obey his will. “For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power” (1 Cor. 4:20).

Following these excuses, Moses played the “why try if you know it's going to fail” card. When God won't be refused, make your obedience contingent on the untried response of others. “But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you’” (Exod. 4:1). Since when did our response to God's call depend on other people's response? We can't base our decision to follow God's will for our lives on what other Christians do or on what popular culture does.

Then came the “woe is me” excuse. After challenging God's command, feigning ignorance and blaming others for how they might react, Moses claimed incompetence. He implied that God's work required his ability to perform and that success was dependent upon his skill. “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Exod. 4:10).

Finally, having exhausted all his negative possibilities—denial, delay, deferment and dissuasion—Moses came to his “can't you find someone else” excuse. “O my Lord, please send someone else” (Exod. 4:13). Moses had finally arrived at his bottom line. If the truth be told, he just didn't want to be involved. In spite of God's call, God's backing and God's power, he was afraid. The will of God required that he face up to his feelings of inadequacy, but he wasn't prepared to do that.

I am amazed at what we will do for ourselves but refuse to do for God. Many of us go to great lengths to live an adventuresome life, but to live our lives for the sake of Christ is asking too much. If we are capable of life-sacrificing passion for our ego goals, why can't we surrender ourselves to God? If some of us can risk our lives to climb Mount Everest, why don't more of us risk our reputations for the sake of the gospel?

Winston Churchill said, “You can always count on Americans to do the right thing,” then added, “after having exhausted all other possibilities.” Most of us begin where Moses began—with excuses.



# Reflections on the lectionary

**Sunday, September 4**

*Exodus 12:1–14; Ezekiel 33:7–11; Romans 13:8–14;  
Matthew 18:15–20*

A PERSON IN our church was complaining bitterly and threatening to leave the church. His power and influence were waning and he was lashing out. After prayer and reflection, I decided that confrontation would escalate the situation into a polarizing fight. Instead of confrontation, he needed space. Like a child throwing a tantrum, he needed to cry it out and regain his composure. His friends in the congregation and I made an effort to give him space. We tried to avoid reacting defensively, prayed for him and maintained our friendships as best we could. I had made a judgment call about judgment. As the apostle Paul said, “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom. 12:18).

But sometimes I wonder if I’m shirking my responsibility when I don’t point out a believer’s fault. If the problem is just between us, it seems reasonable to let it slide. If the escalation of tension will be greater with confrontation than the patience required to endure the problem, I am inclined to live with the problem. Is this the right response? Does “turning the other cheek” mean standing my ground without confronting my brother? Or is it cowardly to evade confrontation?

Turning the other cheek is not the same thing as turning a blind eye. Sometimes love may require that I undertake a costly initiative to save my brother when my every impulse is to ignore him. In the Old Testament lectionary companion to this Gospel text (Ezek. 33:1–11), the watchman is obligated to warn the wicked. If the watchman doesn’t “sound the trumpet” and dissuade the wicked from their ways, the Lord promises to hold the watchman accountable for the Lord’s judgment of the wicked.

Jesus’ spiritual direction on confrontation compels us to distinguish between definable overt sins and the chronic friction we inflict on one another. We are habitual sinners—troublemakers at the core. If we confronted one another over every issue that bothers us, we would spend all of our time scheduling appointments. Matthew identifies the sins that clearly violate God’s word; they include idolatry, infidelity, sexual sins, blasphemy, racial hatred, blatant greed, intentional lying and deliberate manipulation. One way to look at this is to ask whether the sin in question is worth taking to the congregation or if, for the sake of God’s holiness and the sinner’s need for repentance and forgiveness, we are to confront our brother or sister quietly and

prayerfully. If the process fails altogether, Jesus advises treating the hardened sinner “as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” This verdict comes from the one who went out of his way to win over pagans and tax collectors, and from Matthew himself, a former tax collector who knew the power of this gospel love.

Jesus confronted both Judas and Peter in the Upper Room, but in a way that gave them plenty of room to respond positively. Like the faithful watchman, Jesus warned Judas. He exposed his treacherous heart and let Judas know that he was fully aware of his deception. Judas’s feigned innocence (“Surely not I, rabbi?”) thinly concealed a heart that had grown hard and resistant to Jesus. Jesus also confronted Peter, warning him of his weakness and vulnerability. Peter was not as strong as he thought he was. Jesus put him on notice in a confrontation that formed the basis for Peter’s confession and restoration after the resurrection.

There have been times when I did not confront someone because the issues in question belonged to gray areas in church life. I think of the person who uses “ministry” to satisfy his or her ego; of young families who forfeit worship so their children can play soccer or baseball on Sunday morning; of the crusad-

## Mercy takes the sinner seriously, even if it means opening up a can of worms.

er who fixates on a single issue; of the “God and country” worshipers who equate national pride with the kingdom of God. These problems are difficult to confront because the sin seems more subtle and elusive. I am comforted by Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matt. 13:24–30), because he seems to be cutting us some slack, allowing us to let some things take their course. He’s telling us to leave the “weeding” and judging to God. With some of these sticky, intractable problems it is sufficient to pray earnestly and let God be God.

Direct confrontation may not be the best approach when the sin is difficult to name. New Testament scholar Dale Bruner distinguishes between the censorious Christian who is too eager to judge or the coercive Christian who is too quick to “pull up the weeds” and the conscientious church that takes church membership and discipline seriously. Mercy takes the sinner seriously, even if it means opening up a can of worms.

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# Advice and consent

by Benjamin J. Dueholm

WHEN CONGRESSMAN Anthony Weiner resigned his seat over embarrassing online activities, the possibility that the revelations might shed light on the uses of the divine law in Reformation theology was not foremost in the national conversation. All the same, Weiner's fall raised an interesting question about how a sex scandal can unfold without actual sexual contact. The biblical commandment "You shall not commit adultery" forbids only a narrow, if important, slice of sexual life: intercourse between two people, at least one of whom is married to someone else. Sending lewd pictures seems to fall outside of its jurisdiction.

Jesus, however, famously turns this commandment inward in the Sermon on the Mount, condemning even the desire that could lead to disrupting the bonds of marriage. By that more demanding standard, virtual affairs are forbidden. The original commandment can be thought of as corresponding to the first use of the law in Reformation theology: it restrains our destructive impulses for the sake of civil peace. Jesus' elaboration corresponds to the second use of the law: it calls for a purity of motive that drives the sinful human to rely on the grace of God.

While violating provisions of the Torah or the Sermon on the Mount does not by itself constitute grounds for driving someone from office (even in the hive-mind of 24-hour cable news), reactions to the Weiner scandal tended to borrow their moralism from these sources. Voices from inside politics and out, and across the political spectrum, were quickly raised in indignation. Even Weiner's defenders tended to criticize his actions while insisting that they were private, legal and ultimately a distraction from serious public issues.

One prominent pundit went considerably further in defending Weiner: "Weiner does not have a problem. He has a *computer*. The whole world has Weiner's problem: same old horniness, brand new box." This incredulous voice of moral realism belongs to Dan Savage, longtime author of the "Savage Love" sex advice column and editorial director of Seattle's alternative weekly *The Stranger*. With a column read by millions in alternative weeklies and online, a weekly podcast and a televised version of his ongoing question-and-answer tour on college campuses currently in the works, Savage has developed a vast following by dint of his willingness to talk about any sexual topic in the frankest terms available. He's used his platform

to write books on love, sex and family; his newest is based on the It Gets Better Project that he initiated to support LGBT youth who face bullying and isolation (and for which Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America created a video).

Preachers, teachers and counselors who aren't listening to Dan Savage should be—he is one of the more interesting church substitutes in American culture. He started in the 1990s answering questions on rarely discussed sexual practices, but he has since come to address a much wider range of concerns (including the moral and political implications of online affairs, whether

A popular sex columnist exegetes rules about relationships with the precision of a rabbi or canon lawyer.

by politicians or private citizens). When it comes to answering the ethical dilemmas and disappointments that persist even among those with knowing and disenchanted attitudes toward the how-tos of intimate life, Savage's authority has no peer.

Reading the exchanges in "Savage Love" for the first time can be a polar-bear plunge into the world of sexual diversity. A member of New York City's fetish scene recently wrote in to ask how to skip a birthday party orgy ("I hate to decline because these are really good friends and good people"). Characteristically, Savage was unwilling to hold her hand or to dramatize what he views as entirely normal behavior. "If you're old enough to be a part of the 'scene,'" he advised her, "then you're old enough to open your mouth" and tell your friends about your limits.

Yet for all the variety of behavior described in Savage's columns, the same issues come up again and again. Interpreting the commandment against adultery is a preoccupation of both Savage and his readers. Savage, an atheist, wouldn't put it that way—yet he considers questions about the nature and boundaries of monogamy with the precision of a rabbi or canon lawyer.

Some cases are easy. Consider the 50-year-old man who tells

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Savage that his heart and mind have been thrown “into a tail-spin” by a 25-year-old friend. Savage replies, citing the man’s letter: “You’re happily married, you’ve got kids, you have a great sex life—sorry . . . but you’re not gonna get an infidelity permission slip from me, not today.”

A marriage might survive an attack of bad judgment, he goes on, “but your marriage won’t survive if you make the mistake of confusing infatuation and/or lust for love.” Here Savage sounds a lot like an evangelical preacher: the heart is deceitful above all things.

Another letter raises a very different case. A man writes that his mother (“a beautiful woman with a lot of opportunities and social skills”) is having an affair without the knowledge of his father (who is “an antisocial psycho” and a “physical wreck”). His mother had kept her family together for religious and cultural reasons. The letter writer and his brother have been traumatized by news of the affair. Should they tell their father?

Savage replies: “You’re not going to confront her about this affair or any other affair that you might uncover between now and your father’s death and you’re not going to tell your mom you snooped and you and your brother are going to go right on defending your mother to your father and you’re going to show a little respect—a little retroactive respect—for your mother’s privacy by pretending that you don’t know what you do know.

“Your mom sounds like a lovely woman, and you and your brother should be happy that she managed to find a little solace, a little love and tenderness, in the arms of a man who isn’t a raving asshole. She deserves that, doesn’t she?”

People immersed in Christian sexual ethics are likely to have a hard time facing the latter scenario as directly and honestly as Savage does, much less with the confidence and authority he projects. Even more challenging are situations that fall between an obviously reckless infatuation, on the one hand, and a survival measure on the other.

Savage has, on request, laid out rules for cheating in the context of what he calls a “monogamous commitment,” rules for both the married person and the person on the side. “Cheating is permissible when it amounts to the least worst option,” he writes,

i.e., when someone who made a monogamous commitment isn’t getting any at home (sick or disabled or withholding-without-cause spouse) and divorce isn’t an option (sick or disabled or withholding-without-cause-spouse-who-can’t-be-divorced-for-some-karma-imperiling-reason-or-other) and the sex on the side makes it possible for the cheater to stay married and stay sane.

A person who gets involved with a partnered individual in the absence of these conditions is, like the partnered individual, a “cheating piece of shit.” (Savage is liberal in general but strict when violations of mutual agreement are at stake.)

This advice, however, covers only deviations from ostensibly monogamous relationships. Savage has also been called in to manage the complications arising from deliberate non-monogamy. As he sees it, open relationships have to be open for both partners, and the degree of openness must be continually negotiated. After reasonable attempts to work out sexu-



DANIEL C. RICHARDSON

al incompatibility, an affair might be agreed to as a responsible and humane alternative to divorce.

“Ask to have a ‘safety valve’ installed on your marriage,” Savage advises a bored husband (before pointing out that it’s possible that his wife is just as bored and might leap at the prospect of some fresh adventures together). But Savage has also expressed some surprise and frustration when the mutual practice of nonmonogamy proves as liable to abuse as the monogamy its practitioners have abandoned.

**F**or better or for worse, Savage provides real-time exegesis of the commandment against adultery in dialogue with the immensely varied norms and habits of his readers. Modern monogamy faces manifold pressures. Travel, childcare, the arbitrary intrusion of old flames and newfound fetishes, the freshly expanded online world of anonymous exploration, the relative ease of hiding affairs, the moving target of marital expectations—all these turn up in questions asked of Savage.

Today more than ever, by the time people get married they have had a great number of prospective partners to choose from—and the freedom to be apprenticed into sexual and domestic life with them. Yet married people seem no less given to dissatisfaction. When such dissatisfaction arises in situations where children are involved, Savage—to his considerable credit—stresses family stability. (Children “deserve whatever stability and continuity you can provide for them between infidelities,” he advises a married person in the grip of a delusional fixation on an old lover.)

He also urges forgiveness wherever possible. To a correspondent whose spouse lapsed in a way that fell far short of adultery, Savage offers this: “A successful marriage is basically an endless cycle of wrongs committed, apologies offered, and forgiveness granted, all leavened by the occasional orgasm.”

In refereeing tough questions about monogamy and its variations, Savage arguably upholds the substance, if not the letter, of the adultery commandment. The frankness and realism with which he handles such questions provide a sharp contrast to



the tepid affirmations and bashful silences that characterize much mainline preaching and thinking on sex.

Still, Savage's work poses some difficulties. His basic ethic is dramatically individualistic. While the emphasis on personal autonomy, mutual exchange and sexual fulfillment may be refreshing to people who come from sexually inhibited or abusive backgrounds, it is shaped by the expectations of the market for goods and services. In the world of Savage's advice, individuals act much like firms and intimate relationships are quasi-commercial transactions—initiated, maintained and dissolved for mutual benefit. Sexual fulfillment becomes a valuable commodity to be sought by whatever means a partner will accept. Neither monogamy nor polyamory is an idea derived from a vision of the good that transcends individual preferences; they are matters of contract. (Tellingly, Savage's condemnation of bestiality is based not on the categorical indignity of the act but on the inability of animals to give consent.)

Such legal and commercial metaphors are defining more and more of our lives, public and private alike. To engage with these ideas theologically, we need to return to the distinction between law and gospel. The contemporary sexual ethics that Savage represents give some degree of order to intimate life; they help manage the human disaster. But such a goal is not enough for a Christian community called to explore the depths of God's love as reflected and refracted through shared life. We also need sexual ethics to reveal our deeper needs and failings, to create space for the forgiveness of sins and to shape lives redeemed by grace.

As an instrument of familial and civil peace, the command-

ment against adultery needs a bottom line—something for which Savage has a sharp instinct. Counselors and pastors should expect temptation and infidelity to happen; lingering itches are likely to be scratched. Sex tends to be cloaked in superstition, and stripping this away allows us to regard sexual lapses as no less inevitable than any other sin. We tend to forgive serial monogamy more readily than deviations from stable monogamy. Perhaps this norm should be reconsidered.


## In a society characterized by choice and consumption, monogamy may be the most radical lifestyle of all.

Meanwhile, however, monogamy is no longer the default expectation for many couples (though it still correlates with relationship longevity). The church's historic promotion of the dignity and fullness of the marriage bond might not enjoy cultural prestige for much longer.

In its civil use, the adultery commandment might function as a flat prohibition or as a pragmatic sliding scale. But in neither case does it touch on the drastic vulnerability of sexual intimacy, on its transcendence of otherness. A sexual liaison creates a little society, tinged like all societies with injustice, excess, covetousness and selfishness. Young adults may be armored against the slings and arrows of intimate life, but even the most casual affair can leave wounds.

In a curious way, then, American culture may be more open than it has been in recent memory to the theological uses of the commandment against adultery. Read in isolation, Jesus' commandment against lust might lead either to a neurotic regimen of self-policing or to despair at our wretchedness. In the context of the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, however, it suggests the infinite value of one's neighbor—whether enemy, beggar, creditor or spouse. It is not a dour and punitive standard but one that both kills and revives with its overwhelming idealism.

In this sense, monogamy does not consist of refraining from sex outside marriage any more than true worship consists of avoiding idols. Instead, undivided sexual intimacy is a sign or sacrament of a full and altruistic unity that touches every aspect of domestic life. This unity may be adulterated in countless ways short of sexual intercourse, from casual neglect to the dreaded Facebook affair. Most marriages experience such diminishment. Yet most marriages also offer opportunities for sanctification—for a heroic ethic of life together that not only manages the human disaster and perceives its true depths but also calls us to transcend it in the name of hope.

In his lectures on Genesis, Martin Luther calls the house of Abraham "the true church"—it is "nothing else than a kingdom of the forgiveness of sins and of grace." The home, no less than the church, lives distinct from the world by the forgiveness of sins and the sharing of grace. In a society increasingly characterized by unconstrained choices and the devouring logic of consumption, perhaps monogamy is the most radical lifestyle choice of all. 

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### After Psalm Eight

From the terrace, I can see the work  
of your fingers: the constellation Perseus,  
his sword, trailing the sea,  
fixed against the sky. The masterwork  
of light which lingers on the surface  
of the sea transfixes me.

The nightfall has blurred the place  
where your fingers bind ocean to air.  
Stepping off the dock, I shiver  
against the water, unmindful of my face,  
hushed and pale and unaware.  
And, who am I—quivering—

that you would give me heed?  
A moon-jelly ribboning beneath my feet  
glows faint like a ghost,  
its green light tangled in the weeds.

**Richie Hofmann**



# In the meantime

by Richard J. Mouw

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I met in Washington, D.C., with a group of about two dozen young Christian professionals who worked on various congressional staffs and in lobby groups, federal agencies and think tanks. I found them to be a very thoughtful group, intensely interested in integrating their basic evangelical convictions with the day-to-day pursuit of their work assignments.

As these young evangelicals talked about the theological issues that most concerned them in their work in the public arena, one of the dominant questions that occupied their minds was the degree to which we can expect success in our efforts to promote public righteousness during this time when we still await the return of Christ. In struggling with this issue they were clearly attempting to find an alternative to two options that evangelicals often have seen themselves as having to choose between. Either we try as much as possible to stay out of the cultural mainstream, standing over against it as we wait for the final judgment, or we attempt to take over the culture.

We can see both options at work during the past century. The “fundamentalist-modernist” controversy of the first few decades of the 20th century led religious conservatives to a strong sense of alienation from the Protestant mainline as well as from the dominant patterns of the larger culture.

This posture began to change around mid-century, but the changes became especially visible around 1980, when the “faithful remnant” mentality of much of evangelicalism suddenly transformed into a sense of being “the Moral Majority”—one of the better-known organizations of the Christian right. That kind of activism was often accused of “theocratic” motives—a desire to return the U.S. to what many of the evangelical activists saw as its original status as “a Christian nation.”

The young evangelical professionals with whom I met were not theocrats who were hoping for a Christian takeover of the public arena. And they certainly were not world-fleeing fundamentalists. They were trying to stake out an alternative approach.

The Dutch theologian and political leader Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) would have supported their effort. In his thinking about political life, he was convinced that there are good Christian reasons for trying to accomplish some good things, even though we know that we are not likely to achieve any major victories.

The Kuyperian motive for involvement in public life is not to win the battle for righteousness in the here-and-now. None of us is the Messiah. The world has already been given one supremely excellent Messiah, and he has guaranteed that in the final reckoning everything will be made right. In the meantime, though, we must take advantage of every opportunity available to us to do whatever we can to promote his cause—knowing all the time that the final victory will happen only when the Lord decides that it is ready to happen.

Kuyper’s approach has clear biblical grounding. For example, there came a point in the life of ancient Israel when God’s chosen people were carried off into captivity in the wicked city of Babylon. This was a troubling situation for them: no temple in which to worship the Lord, no godly rulers, no laws based on

**If God is patient, we must be also as we seek the welfare of our society.**

revealed guidance about how to live. Then the Lord gave the prophet Jeremiah some new instructions for the captive Israelites. He told them that God wanted them to build houses for their families to live in and to plant crops for their livelihood. God also instructed them to “multiply there,” marrying and producing children. But then God gave them this assignment for their lives as citizens: “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:5–7). The Hebrew word for welfare here is *shalom*, which is often translated as peace but also includes the notions of justice and righteousness.

Similar advice is given to the New Testament church. The apostle Peter addresses believers who, like those ancient Israelites in Babylon, are “aliens and exiles” in the places where they live. And he gives a similar assignment: “Conduct

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*Richard J. Mouw is president of Fuller Theological Seminary. This article is excerpted from his book Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction, just published by Eerdmans.*



yourselves honorably among the Gentiles,” he says, “so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds, and glorify God when he comes to judge” (1 Pet. 2:11–12).

The mandate should be clear: we have to care about the welfare of our fellow human beings, and we must act honorably in their midst.

I do quite a bit of reading in the history of democratic thought. While the origins of democratic theory and practice lie in ancient Greece and Rome, much of the significant thought on the subject occurred in the past four centuries or so in Great Britain and the United States. Political thinkers past and present disagree widely on many of the issues, but there is some consensus on at least two key points. One is that democratic politics requires a willingness to work at compromises. The other is that democracy at its best is practiced by leaders who are willing to engage each other in intelligent and reasoned debate about the fundamental issues at stake in a civil society.

The Mennonites have a wonderful phrase to describe our present situation as Christians. We are “living in the time of God’s patience.” If God is patient, we must be also. We need to patiently engage the issues in our democratic system, with a willingness to find less-than-perfect solutions. But it does take some effort to cultivate that kind of patience. It is understand-

able that if we get genuinely involved in “seeking the welfare” of the larger society in which we live, we will want to succeed in our efforts to bring about some good.

Kuyper offers us an excellent theological basis for working to cultivate that kind of patience. All the square inches of creation belong to Jesus. God in Christ presently rules over all things and over all people. To be sure, many people in the world today do not acknowledge that fact. They do not recognize the authority of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it isn’t just that they refuse to acknowledge his authority—they live in ways that openly oppose God’s will.

## Public life is not the arena for winning the battle for righteousness.

But someday all of this will be straightened out. Jesus will appear on the clouds “and every eye will see him” (Rev. 1:7). The question for Christians today, then, is the one the young evangelical professionals in Washington were posing: How do we act in the meantime? What is our responsibility as citizens in societies in which people do not acknowledge that there is a God who rules over all things?

For Kuyper, a democratic system provided the best framework for Christian involvement in public life under sinful conditions. He could even wax eloquent about how Calvinism has been a major force in history in undergirding democracy.

He may have been overstating the historical case a little, but Kuyper was right to insist that, properly understood, there is an intimate link between a belief in God’s sovereignty and democratic ideals. If God’s authority alone is absolute, then no human government has the right to claim absolute authority over its citizens. And given the propensity toward sinfulness in all human individuals and institutions, governments are not only necessary safeguards against sin, they are themselves affected by our common depravity. Thus the need both to respect government’s proper ordering role and to be clear about its God-ordained limitations.

Kuyper gave much thought to how a society ought to be structured when it encompasses a diversity of belief systems and lifestyles. He was adamant in his refusal to resort to imposing an “established religion” on this diversity. Historian James Bratt puts it nicely:

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"Kuyper did not want a naked public square but a crowded one," with no belief system "having an official advantage." Kuyper was endorsing "pluralism under secularization but not secularism"—that is, he was showing us how to encourage the interaction among a plurality of viewpoints in a highly secularized culture, but without turning the secular into an "ism," an ideology that simply leaves God out of the picture.

In Kuyper's view, the state should act more like a referee than like a coach or a cheerleader, showing impartiality toward a variety of religious and moral perspectives—as well as irreligious and immoral ones—while allowing them to compete for the allegiances of citizens within a framework characterized by fair play.

To be sure, support for this kind of referee political system does not come easily for those who nurture deep convictions about what is right or wrong. This is why we have to keep reminding ourselves that there is a Judgment Day coming, but that it has not yet arrived. We live in a time when righteousness and unrighteousness exist side by side, and believers must establish their patterns of living with this fact in mind.

It also important to keep reminding ourselves that the struggle against sin is waged within each human soul. The line between good and evil cannot be easily drawn between groups of people. The real conflict is between differing sets of basic life-guiding principles. Believers may have the right principles, but they continue to be plagued by their innate sinfulness. The antithesis reaches into each of us. And because of the workings of common grace, unbelievers often perform better than we might expect, even when they serve perverse principles.

A theologian whom I greatly respect once told me that he was puzzled by my admiration for Kuyper—and especially by my insistence that Kuyper's views are helpful today. "After all," he said, "we are in a post-Christendom period in human history, and Kuyper's thought is still very Constantinian." No call for a Kuyper-type approach to culture in general, and politics in particular, can avoid addressing that issue.

The post-Christendom label is a case in point for the considerable talk these days about our being "post" this or that pattern of the past. Kuyper's thought fits nicely in certain respects with the way contemporary postmodern thinkers discuss the defects of "the Enlightenment project."

Enlightenment thought saw human reason—or more generally, an enlightened human consciousness—as the high-

est standard in the universe for deciding issues of truth and goodness. On that view, if there is anything worthwhile in religion, we find it by seeing whether it conforms to or even reinforces what we "enlightened" human beings can come to know without the aid of any sort of revelation.

Most of the postmodern thinkers who are asking us to move to a post-Enlightenment way of viewing reality are not calling for a return to relying on God as the source of meaning and truth. And even in the Christian world, the demand for a post-Enlightenment perspective is not regularly linked to a commitment to classic orthodoxy. But that is precisely what Kuyper was after. He rejected the supremacy of enlightened human consciousness in order to highlight the fact that it is God's will alone that reigns supreme in the universe.

Kuyper's rejection of Enlightenment thinking has a close connection to his views about the political arrangement that people have in mind today when they condemn "Christendom." Bratt points to that connection when he says that the rejection of the Enlightenment enabled the neo-Calvinists to declare, to their everlasting credit, that reason was the servant of the heart; that no intellectual activity, including the natural sciences, was impartial or value-free or without presuppositions; and that every social organization operated according to and in the interests of an ideology.

Both the Enlightenment and Christendom were linked to ideologies about social organization that Kuyper rejected. In

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the case of the Enlightenment, Kuyper saw its philosophical perspective as the inspiration for the French Revolution, in which crowds of people, inspired by the Enlightenment's proclamation of the sovereignty of reason, set out to overthrow ancient orders and practices, beheading public officials and desecrating places of worship. All of that was a manifestation of a basic project which, as Kuyper put it, "substituted the will of the individual for the will of the Creator of nations." When he chose to name his political party "the Anti-Revolutionary Party," it was precisely the French Revolution that he had in mind.

But in opposing the ideology undergirding the French Revolution, Kuyper was not attempting to preserve all that the French Revolution had been bent on destroying. His complaint about the French Revolution was that its ideology was so all-embracing that it used "enlightened" political power to diminish the life of the other spheres. And he had the same kind of worry about the older Constantinian alliance between church and state.

Bratt observes that one of Kuyper's key objections to the ideology of the French Revolution was that "it shattered social bonds by valorizing the individual and the ethic of self-interest." In its own way, Constantinianism fostered a similar kind of shattering, by attempting to subsume all the spheres of life under the control of a church-state alliance.

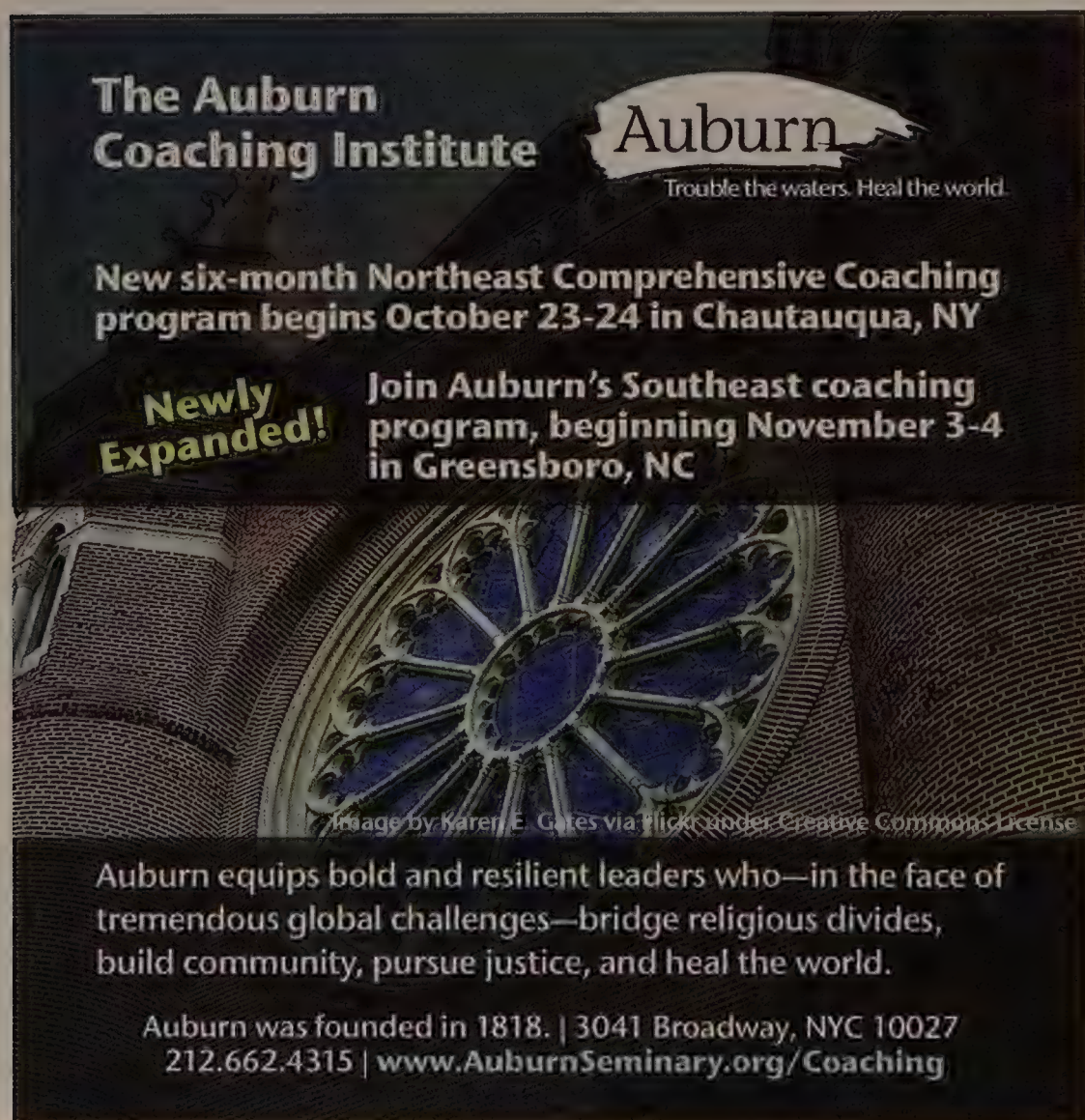
The criticisms of the Constantinian arrangement are legitimate. When the church allies itself too closely with political power it loses the freedom to be the kind of church that God wants it to be.

The late Lesslie Newbigin, who served for many years during the 20th century as a missionary in India, made this case very effectively. When Newbigin returned to the British Isles upon his retirement, he was shocked by the major cultural changes that had taken place there as well as on the European continent and in North America. When he began his career he saw himself as being sent out from a Christian culture—where Christianity was "the established religion"—to a mission field. But now he realized that his own homeland had become a mission field. Christians in the West, Newbigin observed, could no longer take a dominant Christian influence for granted. We are now, he said, "post-Christendom." But that is not a thing to be regretted, he quickly added; the church should always see itself as missional. The Christendom arrangement lured the church into a sense of "owning" the culture that kept it from full faithfulness to the gospel.

All of that can be enthusiastically endorsed by Kuyperians. One of the reasons why Kuyper thought of himself as a neo-Calvinist was because he wanted to distance himself from the way earlier generations of Calvinists had used political power to further the church's cause.

**T**he problem, though, is that sometimes those who make much of the dangers of Constantinianism and Christendom place overly strict limits on how Christians can relate to public life. This was made clear to me in the conversation with the theologian who thought that my affinity with Kuyper meant that I am dangerously close to Constantinianism. I pushed the person to explain why he interpreted my perspective in that manner. His response came in the form of two questions: Do I think that Christians can work effectively for Christian goals "within the American political system"? And do I believe that Christians can not only endorse the use of violence in law enforcement and military campaigns, but actually themselves serve as police and members of the military?

I responded to both questions in the affirmative, but also with the necessary qualifications. I believe that there are limits to the kinds of political compromises that Christians can agree to. And I also believe that police action and military campaigns must be conducted within the kind of moral framework associat-



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ed with just war doctrine. The response: “Aha! So you admit it. You really are a Constantinian!”

The fact is that my argument has to do with issues that go back at least as far as the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The Anabaptist wing of the Reformation insisted that the other Protestant movements, Lutheranism and Calvinism, had not adequately broken with Catholic thought and practice on some crucial issues. *Anabaptism* means “rebaptism,” which signifies the Anabaptist rejection of

## There are limits to the kinds of political compromise that Christians can agree to.

infant baptism. Any person who had been baptized as a baby had to be rebaptized as an adult if that person wanted to join the Anabaptist community.

Obviously, this insistence was in good part based on questions of biblical interpretation. But the Anabaptists also argued that because of the Constantinian arrangement, infant baptism was too closely tied to the idea of citizenship. They called for the church to be a community of disciples—of persons who make a conscious adult decision, signified in baptism by immersion, to follow the Way of the Cross—who live with a clear sense of being over against the dominant culture. This includes both a commitment to non-violence and a refusal to serve as agents of the worldly “powers that be.”

The debate about such matters is still alive, with many influential Christian leaders today arguing that the gospel calls us to a way of life so antithetical to the patterns of collective life in the larger human culture that Christians are required, in effect, to create an alternative culture. One influential example of such thinking is the 1989 book by Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, in which the authors issue an Anabaptist-type call for the formation of a kingdom community living in separation from the practices of the larger human community, especially those practices that are closely aligned with the political assumptions of secular thought.

I take an important cue on this subject from Newbigin. As critical as he was of the Constantinian/Christendom arrangement, he insisted that we must be careful in our assessment of what the errors of that arrangement were. “Much has been written,” he observed,

“about the harm done to the cause of the gospel when Constantine accepted baptism, and it is not difficult to expatiate on this theme.” There can be no question, Newbigin said, that the church has regularly fallen “into the temptation of worldly power.” But he goes on: should we conclude from this that the proper alternative was for the church simply to “have . . . washed its hands of responsibility for the political order”?

Do we really think, Newbigin asks, that the cause of the gospel would have been better served “if the church had refused all political responsibility, if there had never been a ‘Christian’ Europe”? The fact is, he notes, that the Constantinian project had its origins in a creative response to a significant cultural challenge. There was in Constantine’s day, he says, a spiritual crisis in the larger culture, and people “turned to the church as the one society that could hold a disintegrating world together.” And for all the mistakes that were made along the way, it was nonetheless a good thing that the church actively took up this challenge.

This is an insightful analysis, and there is every reason to think that Kuyper would agree with Newbigin. For Kuyper, there is nothing wrong with working within the political structures to serve the cause of righteousness in the world. But we must always do so with an awareness of the Constantinian danger of forming an unhealthy—and unfaithful—alliance between the church and political power.

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Why is Safeway throwing out good produce?

# Gone to waste

by Amy Frykholm

IT'S TUESDAY, AND I'M making my rounds at the local Safeway, shopping for the Community Meal kitchen, sponsored by the Episcopal church I attend. I work as a cook there once a week. In my small, remote town in the Colorado mountains, Safeway is the only grocery store.

The store has forbidden me to accept food donations at the deli counter, so I speed past it, wheeling my empty cart to the back and through the double doors toward the dairy cooler. I check to see if Rickie is working because she sometimes has crates of milk, eggs and yogurt ready for the dumpster; I can have them after she scans them. Then I move on to see Kelly in the grocery department, but today she has nothing. "See Anita in bakery," she says.

While I am looking for Anita, I pass Claudia in the produce section, another place where I am forbidden to ask for food. I see two boxes heaped with fresh fruits and vegetables. I try not to let my eyes wander to them, but on top I see lettuce, green beans, oranges and cucumbers, enough for the meal I am about to make—and all headed to the trash.

Anita arrives with a cart of cupcakes. Lately we've been loaded down with cupcakes. For the second week in a row, I am picking up thousands of calories in cheap sweets—and not a single hint of green. I stop in the produce section and stare at what's for sale. I will try to get enough for the meal for under \$20, but with the average price of produce at \$1.50 a pound, it will not be easy.

My experience at the local Safeway mirrors the perplexing problem of food and nutrition in the United States. Calories are easy to come by, but fresh produce is not. For virtually nothing, I could feed the people who come to the Community Meal cupcakes with two inches of frosting. I could buy 200 calories worth of donuts for 23 cents—but 200 calories worth of broccoli would cost \$1.97. And though Safeway throws away thousands of pounds of fresh food every year, it does not donate any.

For ten years our kitchen received boxes of fresh produce from Safeway and used them as the basis for 10,000 meals a year. Because we used donated food, we were able to serve our guests for about 75 cents per plate and offer them a rich variety of vegetables, fruits, proteins, grains and sweets. I became a master of zucchini and eggplant casseroles and a thousand and one salads. The first thing I did every morning when I came into the kitchen was peek into the vegetable boxes and make choices, letting the ingredients I saw inspire

me. Was today a day for cream of broccoli soup or for green beans simmered in mint and coconut milk? Did we have cucumbers and red onions for an old-fashioned salad or apples for a Waldorf?

After we selected the fruits and vegetables for our menus, we put the remaining boxes in the hallway so that people could "shop." Over and over again, we heard people say things like, "Oh, green beans. I love fresh green beans. I never buy them for myself because they are too expensive." At the end of the day, we sent the remaining vegetables to a local farm to feed to its goats and chickens. It wasn't a perfect system; it had its share of frustrations and difficulties. But it was almost waste-free.

## Grocery stores are able to make more money by wasting food.

In January of this year a new manager at Safeway decided to adhere to district policy. While he would still donate dairy and bakery items, he would no longer give us fresh produce. We begged him to change his mind, then we wrote to the district—all to no avail. The district public relations person was relieved that we were no longer receiving the produce. "I am frankly disturbed to hear that you were receiving those items, since they are not allowed to be given away," she intoned in a voice that invited no conversation.

Nationally, food products make up 63 percent of a supermarket's disposed waste stream. That's approximately 3,000 pounds thrown away per employee every year. One day, as I was looking mournfully over another cart of donated cupcakes, the manager told me that a significant amount of waste is built into all retail systems. When new food comes in to replace the old, it often works better for him to throw the old food away rather than discount it or give it away. This way his customers are forced to buy the new items at full price. In the conflicted logic of this food system, the store can make more money by wasting quantities of food.

Of the country's top five food retailers, Safeway's policies have been rated last in responsible use of food waste by food recovery operations. The reason that the Community Meal





fares so well for so long was because of the moral decisions of individual employees who were not following company policy. Says Safeway spokesperson Teena Massingill: “If a produce item is deemed unfit for sale, we do not donate it for human consumption. It may be deemed unfit because it is bruised or overripe. . . . Safeway does not donate items that are not fit for consumption or could be unfit for consumption when they reach the final recipient.”

Any food recoverer knows that this is doublespeak. Prior to this year our group received many bags of lettuce that had simply passed their “best by” date but were in perfect condition. We received bunches of grapes in which only a few grapes had gone bad. We also received apples with tiny bruises and tomatoes with no visible scars. While recovered food does need to be handled properly, it is not any more “unfit for human consumption” than the lettuce in my crisper.

Safeway repeatedly tells us that the reason it no longer donates produce to us is the risk of litigation. “We’re a litigious society,” the manager told me. “I don’t care how many waivers you sign saying you won’t sue, if someone gets sick, you’ll find a way to sue.” A federal law called the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, enacted in 1996, prevents such lawsuits, but Safeway contends that this law provides insufficient protection.

Not all grocery stores calculate the risks and benefits in the same way, and many give away fresh produce to ever increasing and more sophisticated food rescue organizations across the country. The Society of St. Andrew, a nationwide food recovery organization, estimates that it has rescued 3 million pounds of food this year alone. A smaller organization in northwest Michigan recently celebrated having recovered its millionth pound of food after only two years in operation. Food rescue organizations work with grocery stores, restaurants, farmers’ markets and dozens of other retail establishments.

But in our small town such rescue operations are almost

irrelevant. Safeway is the only grocery store here, so while there are other grocery stores in the area with other policies, we have to drive a considerable distance to pick up food from them. We live at an altitude of 10,200 feet with a very short growing season, so producing all of our own fruits and vegetables is difficult if not impossible. For the time being, we are buying vegetables from Safeway. If it is true that we vote for the food system that we want with every dollar that we spend, then I’m voting for Safeway’s system every week. It’s a huge

# Do we try to make the most of a wasteful system or do we try to create a better one?

waste, and produce is expensive due to the number of trucking miles that lie behind every leaf of lettuce.

Our Community Meal kitchen built relationships with local food retailers and carefully cultivated them over time. It is no accident that I know the names of all of the local Safeway employees; we instituted the Community Meal undertaking on the basis of the idea that a community is a place where people are mutually sustained. When a Safeway employee named Sue was going through a hard time, we fed her at the Community Meal. When George was fired from the meat department, he knew he could come to us and tell his story in safety. When Cliff was having a manic episode, our priest made sure he got something to eat, took him for a walk, talked to him about counseling and tried to help him keep his job. These relationships had many different dimensions, and we were committed to helping one another. But the relationships did not ultimately help us trump corporate policy.

The context in which this dispute with the local Safeway is happening is the extensive and ironic system of food production



and distribution. Food waste expert Jonathan Bloom estimates that 40 percent of the food produced in America is thrown away, and much of that never reaches a person's refrigerator. It is dumped at the production site or dumped by the government or dumped by the grocery store. When food reaches the landfill, its rot contributes to the production of dangerous methane gases; landfills are the no. 2 source of human-created emissions.

To put this into perspective locally: Safeway used to give the Community Meal about 200 pounds of food per week. We used it in an almost waste-free system, thus saving the landfill from

adding 10,000 pounds of wasted food per year and producing thousands of pounds of methane gas. Pretty remarkable for such a small operation.

Deepening the irony is the cost and difficulty of delivering proper nutrition to the people we serve. Studies show that the less money a person makes, the higher the percentage of income that person spends on food. Cheaper calories mean less healthy food, higher health-care costs, lower quality of life and earlier deaths.

The United States imports 80 percent of its food while wasting 40 percent of what it produces. Items like spinach and lettuce are trucked 1,000 miles from California only to have much of it thrown away. When the United States removes food it does not need from the global markets, it raises the food prices for nations that desperately need food. Some of these countries end up growing nonnutritive crops like sugar beets and coffee for the United States.

The unfortunate irony that we are facing at the Community Meal—and in school classrooms, supermarkets and McDonalds restaurants across the country—is that in a time when one in four American families has too little money to buy the food it needs, one in three Americans is obese.

Recently our priest drove over a mountain pass and brought back fruit, mushrooms, green and red peppers, onions, zucchini and potatoes from a market 40 miles away. Food Bank of the Rockies, a large regional food rescue organization, arrived later that week with dozens of boxes of organic spinach. For the meal that day we served quiche, chicken noodle soup, Spanish rice, pinto beans, roasted vegetables and ham with pineapple salsa. We also had fruit and vegetable salads—in other words, abundance. We celebrated as if we were at a banquet.

But I was left with questions. What is the best way for our local project to be a steward of our resources? Do we continue to lobby Safeway for a change in policy? Do we throw our efforts into establishing a year-round greenhouse? Do we try to make the most of a wasteful system or try to create a better one? Finally, how can we, as activists Frances and Anna Lappé have asked, “build communities in tune with nature’s wisdom in which no one anywhere has to worry about putting food—safe, healthy food—on the table?”



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by Barbara Brown Taylor

## Biblical mystery tour

**THE FIRST TIME** I visited Jerusalem, Saddam Hussein was invading Kuwait. My stay at Saint George's College began with a safety drill that included some mention of gas masks, which made me a light sleeper for the rest of my stay. During the 20 years since, I've wondered how much I missed while straining to hear the whine of SCUD missiles overhead.

In June I returned to find that much had changed. The last time I entered the Old City through Damascus Gate, soldiers patrolled the parapet above my head. This time the ramparts were empty. Last time I had a month to explore the city; this time I was on a day tour. Last time I had working scholars for guides; this time I had an affable Brit who looked older than the picture on his ID.

What had not changed were the questions people asked. Is this the real Upper Room? Are we on the Via Dolorosa yet? How long do olive trees live? Could Jesus have prayed under one of these? Questions like these have brought pilgrims to the Old City for centuries, regardless of whose missiles might be flying overhead. They want to know where the treasure is hid.

Hearing them again after 20 years, I listened more for intent than content. Some people in my group focused on the details of their fundamental narratives, working hard to square truth with fact, while others picked at any loose joints they could find. My guide was such a pro that he found ways to make sure they all won something without ever revealing his own hand.

So many tour groups stood pressed together that I could hear other guides' answers too. Some practiced historical tact ("Olive trees live a long time, so it is possible that Jesus prayed under one of them"), while others used scripture to authenticate sites ("See that flaw in the stone? Now will someone please read Matthew 21:42 out loud?").

Listening to the guides, I decided there was a niche market going to waste. Surely there were ten or 12 people a day who would sign up for a Mystery Tour of Jerusalem, designed to deepen their questions instead of answering them.

*Are we on the Via Dolorosa yet?* We might be. Since the street Jesus walked on was at least 20 feet below this one, "close" is as close as we can get. Even if you dug straight down, you could not find his footprints. His followers covered those right up.

*Was Jesus really crucified here, just feet away from his tomb?* No one knows for sure. Constantine's mother thought so, which is why a church was built here. But there is another site

outside the city walls, behind an old bus station, that might have been the place. Both of the rock formations look like skulls. Both have their advocates, but if you had to choose between a bus station and a church . . .?

*Did Mary really die in Jerusalem?* She could have. Visit the Abbey of the Dormition and you can say a prayer at a tomb with her likeness on it, but another tradition puts her in Ephesus. Her house there is so green and breezy that it can change your whole idea of her. After all that death, she lived by a spring with a view of the sea. After all that shouting, she woke to birds. At least maybe she did.

Surely there are a few believers willing to surrender their grip on one story in order to have two or more—with arrows pointing in different directions and endings that can never be reconciled—because they are convinced there is more truth in the mystery held open by the corners of the stories than in the certainty of just one.

## For centuries, pilgrims have come to Jerusalem filled with questions.

Jesus told a very short story about a man who finds a treasure and hides it in a field. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. The end.

But why does the man assume that he cannot have the treasure without buying the whole field? I have no idea. All I know is how quickly the treasure takes over the story—the finding of it, the hiding of it, the joy of knowing where it is, the digging up of it in the end. Where is the treasure hid? That is what most of us want to know.

The man in the story does not care. Once he buys the field, the story ends—or at least this one does. Soon there will be more stories sprouting up all over, for once the treasure is in the field, the whole field becomes the treasure. It could be here. Then again, it might be over there.

Maybe digging it up again was never the man's plan. Maybe the plan was to leave it right where it was, so that no matter where people walked in that field, they could imagine the treasure right under their feet.

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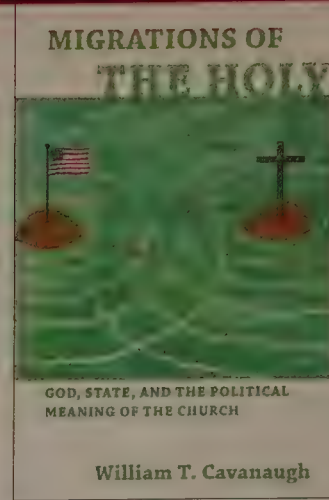
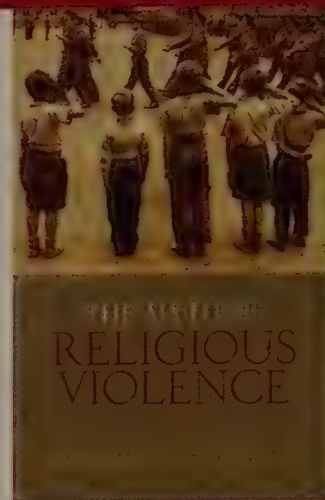
Barbara Brown Taylor teaches at Piedmont College.



# IN Review

## The myth about religion

by Walter Brueggemann



**W**illiam Cavanaugh of DePaul University has written a pair of stunningly important books. On the basis of careful, detailed historical scholarship, he makes a clear and persuasive argument for overturning a founding myth of the modern Western state. In the title of his first book, he deliberately uses the term *myth* in a double sense: myth as a legitimating founding narrative for modern Western states and myth as a story that is manifestly false in light of careful study and thus a false founding narrative.

The myth that occupies Cavanaugh is the belief that religion is inherently sectarian, divisive and potentially violent and that a primary function of the modern Western state is to restrain and overcome such religious violence in the interest of a peaceful, well-ordered civil society. Cavanaugh traces this myth from its beginnings in Spinoza, Hobbes and Locke, who wrote in the 17th century in the wake of the “religious wars” of that period, notably the Thirty Years’ War, which culminated in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, a settlement that framed the shape of modern Europe in its sovereign secular states.

Spinoza argued that religion must be kept private and apart from political power. Hobbes judged that an absolute state was required in order to keep religious, sectarian violence in check. And Locke championed tolerance that would counter the intolerance he found in all religion. All of these thinkers countenanced the use of state coercion when necessary to restrain a propensity to religious violence, so that the state properly and legitimately could exercise a monopoly on violence.

Cavanaugh’s analysis culminates in an exposure of the absurdity of the rants of the pseudomoralists Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens, the current stars of antireligion, who, faithful to the myth, urge the killing of Muslims in the interest of civic well-being: “Some propositions are so dangerous that it may even be ethical to kill people for believing them” (Harris); “I think the enemies of civilization should be beaten and killed and defeated, and I don’t make any apology for it” (Hitchens).

These silly statements are the payout of the dominant strand of Western thought that indicts religion generically for being intrinsically violent.

Between the work of the great philosophers of the 17th century and these recent atheistic rants, Cavanaugh shows how the assumption that religion is inherently violent has shaped policy. The same uncritical assumption is reflected in the work of careful and generous religious scholars such as Martin Marty and Mark Juergensmeyer. Marty, Cavanaugh says, proceeds with a vague notion of religion that “divides” and “can be violent,” and Juergensmeyer allows for the peculiar intensity of potential religious violence. More important, this assumption has served as a basis for U.S. Supreme Court decisions, notably in opinions written by Justice Hugo Black.

The assumption that religion is intrinsically violent has given legitimacy to the state as a restraining power and has consistently justified state violence as a restraint against religious violence, because state violence is seen as unifying, context-specific and rational and religious violence as “absolute, divisive and irrational.” As Cavanaugh

### The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict

By William T. Cavanaugh  
Oxford University Press, 296 pp., \$49.95

### Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church

By William T. Cavanaugh  
Eerdmans, 208 pp., \$18.00 paperback

explores this assumption, one can see how it sets the tone for right-wing radio talk as well as U.S. war policy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Cavanaugh not only exposes the myth for what it is, he provides details to show precisely how the myth is not grounded in reality. He offers a close analysis of European wars in the 16th and 17th centuries and demonstrates that they were not religious in the sense of pitting Protestants against Catholics. Rather, Protestants and Catholics were sometimes allies, and Protestants fought Catholics, all of which makes clear that such wars were not religiously motivated but reflected and served a complex set of interests rooted in *realpolitik*. Indeed, the trigger for the Thirty Years’ War, Cavanaugh avers, was the ambition of the (Catholic) Habsburgs and the response of various alliances, Protestant and Catholic, that sought to contain Habsburg hegemony.

Walter Brueggemann’s most recent book is *Disruptive Grace: Reflections on God, Scripture, and the Church (Fortress)*.



His conclusion is that such modern states did not restrain religious violence. In fact, the aggression and ambition of modern states was the cause of the wars. Thus the myth is turned on its head. The states did not restrain but evoked the violence that has been credited to religion.

Beyond the historical political and military data Cavanaugh so carefully offers is his recognition that the ideology of the modern liberal state also conjured the modern generic notion of religion without any reference to the particulars of any faith tradition, as well as the counterreality of "Western civilization," which was constituted by the preferred order of the modern states. In some detail he shows that those who assume the myth is true are consistently unable to provide a definition of religion in order to distinguish religious violence from state violence. The result is that when a state (such as the U.S.) appeals to religious claims in its practice of violence, it can deny that it is religious violence. The violence of the state is presented as nonreligious and therefore not absolute; consequently the state receives a pass on its practice of violence.

Cavanaugh shows how the Supreme Court has painted itself into a corner, for example, in its judgment that the religion of the Unitarians is benign because it accommodates the liberal state, whereas the religion of the Jehovah's Witnesses is dangerous because it challenges the absolute claim of the state. The result is that the Court is unable to arrive at a workable and consistent notion of religion. There is religion and then there is religion.

It turns out, according to Cavanaugh, that every concentrated community of power, whether of religion or of the state, is likely to tilt toward violence under certain circumstances. Thus he proposes not that religion is incapable of violence, but that religion is no more prone to violence than civil society, which needs, perforce, to imagine that its violence is necessary, rational and innocent.

The big thought for Cavanaugh is that in the 17th century there was a migration of the holy from the old religious claims

to the more recent claims of the newly formed states. That migration was accomplished by the workings of modern rationality with its refusal of old tradition. On the one hand, all religious claims were relativized and denied their absolute legitimacy (including their legitimacy in coercing people to use violence). On the other hand, the modern state was placed beyond criticism, including criticism of its systemic violence. Thus the religious community could now be criticized and exposed as penultimate, while the modern state was granted absolute authority, supported by its own deliberate appeal to the totems of religious symbol.

In his more recent book, *Migrations of the Holy*, Cavanaugh continues and extends his argument. He judges that the nation-state was formed at the turn of the modern era as a concentration of power for the conduct of war. In order to sustain itself in the violence business, he argues, the nation-state has taken to

itself religious or quasi-religious claims that are shrouded so as not to be subject to the critique that it is a form of religion that is producing violence. In the end the nation-state—not least the United States in its pious, self-assured exceptionalism—has become the core idol in the modern world.

Cavanaugh ponders the public role of the church as a political player for truth-telling and truth-acting in opposition to the deception and self-deception of the nation-state. Cavanaugh's accent is on the visible church, which has plenty to repent of and does so in humility and vulnerability. In his defense of the visible church, Cavanaugh surprisingly proposes a Chalcedonian ecclesiology in which the church at its best avoids both the temptation to imagine itself wholly divine and the temptation to settle for being wholly human. I find his last pages difficult and not very convincing because they take on the tone of a term paper that adjudicates the claims

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Oct 31, 2006 by John M. Buchanan

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Mar 08, 2005

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Jul 13, 2010 by Michael Lindvall

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**Living in a material world »**

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of Stanley Hauerwas, Romand Coles and Jeffrey Stout. However, that does not detract from the compelling force of his overall argument. Every thoughtful U.S. Christian knows about the ideology of the state and about the summons to the church to show its public face with some nerve and resolve. Cavanaugh has set the current challenge in historical perspective in a persuasive way.

In the U.S., the state enjoys the kind of absoluteness envisioned by Hobbes, only it uses totems of religious endorsement to sustain it that Hobbes could not have imagined or countenanced. It is an absoluteness that evokes on the one hand diatribes like Jeremiah Wright's against America (and we see how that went for him) and on the other hand the required sign-off "God bless America." We are witnesses to an assumed holiness of the state in its aggression that is rooted in a myth that continues to have wide and uncritical acceptance.

## Pentecostalism in America

By R. G. Robins

Praeger, 176 pp., \$34.95

Walk through the book section at your local Walmart and chances are you'll find popular titles written by individuals within the Pentecostal and charismatic movement, such as Joyce Meyer and Joel Osteen. Flip on your television and you might encounter one of the most recognized ministers with a Pentecostal background, T. D. Jakes, dispensing advice alongside Dr. Phil. Next time you browse for nutritional supplements online, you may come across Divine Health nutritional products, promoted by Don Colbert, a charismatic

*Reviewed by Joseph Williams, assistant professor of religion at Rutgers University and author of Spirit Cure: A History of Pentecostal Healing (forthcoming from Oxford University Press).*

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health guru who graduated from Oral Roberts University School of Medicine. Sarah Palin, vice presidential candidate in 2008, grew up attending the Pentecostal Wasilla (Alaska) Assembly of God.

The Pentecostal movement, which has become a major player in the American religious and not-so-religious marketplace, had its humble beginnings in the early 1900s as an interracial revival. The earliest Pentecostals quickly splintered into a variety of denominations, dividing along racial lines and over a variety of doctrinal issues. Charismatic renewal and the so-called third wave spread Pentecostal emphases to a much broader audience during the second half of the 20th century and introduced several new permutations of the Spirit-filled life in the process. The presence of numerous independent ministries throughout the history of the Pentecostal tradition muddles the complicated story further.

Thankfully, several first-rate historical studies of Pentecostalism in the United States can help interested observers map

out key aspects of the tradition (see, for example, Grant Wacker's *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* and Randall Stephens's *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South*). For good reason these studies narrow the field of vision by focusing on a particular time period, region, leader or ethnic group. A few brave souls have attempted to provide an overview of the full spectrum of Pentecostal churches and trends, often situating their discussion of Pentecostalism in the United States in the context of global developments. *Pentecostalism in America*, by R. G. Robins, provides by far the best broadly synthetic treatment to date.

Robins is particularly well suited for the undertaking. Not only does he have considerable talent as a historian and writer, he cut his teeth on the "ancient tradition" of East Texas Pentecostalism, where "protocol decreed that services should be held Wednesday night, Friday night, and twice on Sundays, with the first Monday of each month set aside for fellowship meeting and youth rally." Having time and time again seen adults "publicly scream, weep, run, leap, thrash, flail, fall prostrate, speak in tongues, and generally cavort about," Robins knows whereof he speaks. He suggests that the book "is a by-product of my attempt to come to terms with growing up Pentecostal."

And what a beautiful by-product it is. The carefully nuanced yet accessible volume situates American Pentecostalism within the broader context of American Christianity and U.S. history as a whole. Robins expertly interweaves discussions of race, class, education, gender, globalization and other issues. He is especially adept at highlighting the "zones of conver-

gence" that appeared outside of the formal Pentecostal denominations in the second half of the 20th century and facilitated Pentecostalism's growing influence on more established forms of Christianity in the U.S. Examples include the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, Oral Roberts University, Aglow International and the Jesus People movement.

Robins suggests that the significance of such sites of "syncretistic interface" increased with time. "Denominations provided the motive force of Pentecostalism during most of its first century," he writes, "but by the end of the 20th century the center of dynamism had begun to shift to the zones where denominational Pentecostalism, independent Pentecostalism, and the charismatic movement converged and overlapped." The various megachurches built by figures such as T. D. Jakes epitomized this transition, as did the formation of the Association of Vineyard Churches and the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship.

Robins also shines a welcome spotlight on a significant racial divide between white and black Pentecostals that has persisted over the past several decades. Awareness of such divisions has prompted efforts at racial reconciliation, which most notably produced the Memphis Miracle in 1994, but significant boundaries remain. The racial gap is especially apparent in Pentecostal political culture. By and large, predominantly white congregations joined a larger evangelical exodus from the Democratic Party and now hew much closer to the political right, while African-American Pentecostals increasingly identify with the black church and are "far more supportive of Great Society-style intervention on behalf of the needy and oppressed."

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Though Robins does not highlight its significance in relation to issues of race, in the latter decades of the 20th century, the burgeoning Word of Faith, or positive confession, branch of the movement transcended racial lines as it established itself as a major player within Pentecostal and charismatic circles. More than a few believers were thrilled to hear that “the child of God can speak into being anything that is consistent with the will of God.” The appeal of Word of Faith-style emphasis to a wide swath of Pentecostals and charismatics also calls attention to one factor I wish Robins had paid more attention to: the convergence of Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality with religious perspectives drawn from well outside the bounds of more traditional forms of Christianity.

Pentecostals who touted the power of positive thought and speech to effect healing and the acquisition of wealth tapped into a powerful current in American religion that originated in the New Thought tradition of the late 19th century and was popularized by figures such as Ralph Waldo Trine and Norman Vincent Peale and later by Oprah Winfrey. Though Robins does highlight Pentecostals who, in the words of Oral Roberts, taught about the power of believing that “something good is going to happen to you,” he does not situate these trends within the broader American religious context. The extent to which New Thought and its successors influenced Pentecostalism can be debated, but the overlap is unmistakable, and several of the most high-profile Pentecostal and charismatic figures have exploited these similarities on their path to prominence. By neglecting to discuss the influence of traditions such as New Thought on Pentecostal culture, Robins missed an opportunity to move beyond his focus on the evangelicalization of the movement and to demonstrate the significant points of contact linking Pentecostals with American religionists of a very different stripe.

Few religious traditions can rival the success of Pentecostalism in the United States over the course of the 20th century, and I can think of no better guide than *Pentecostalism in America* for identifying and making sense of the Pentecostal threads woven into the tapestry of American culture.

## Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life

By Richard Rohr  
Jossey-Bass, 240 pp., \$19.95

Franciscan priest Richard Rohr—author of, among other titles, *The Naked Now* and *From Wild Man to Wise Man*—has written his most sage, most important book yet. The message of *Falling Upward* is straightforward and bracing: the spiritual life is not static. You will come to a crisis in your life, and after the crisis, if you are open to it, you will enter a space of spiritual refreshment, peace and compassion that you could not have imagined before.

Rohr’s framework leans heavily on Carl Jung. The spiritual life has two stages. In the first half of life, you are devoted to establishing yourself; you focus on making a career and on finding friends and a partner; you are crafting your identity. Spiritually, people in the first half of life are often drawn to order, to religious routine. We are developing habits and letting ourselves be shaped by the norms and practices of our family and community.

Then—a crisis. “Some kind of falling,” Rohr says, is necessary for continued spiritual development. “Normally a job, fortune, or reputation has to be lost,” writes Rohr, “a death has to be suffered, a house has to be flooded, or a disease has to be endured.” The crisis can be devastating. The crisis undoes you. The flood doesn’t just flood your house—it washes out your spiritual life. What you thought you knew about living the spiritual life no longer suffices for the life you are living.

Rohr does not offer a syrupy evasion of this crisis. But he does underline two crucial points. First, God has not abandoned you, even if you are sure that God has. (“All the books of the Bible seem to agree,” notes Rohr, “that *somehow God is with us and we are not alone.*”) Second, “We grow spiritually much more by doing it wrong than by doing it right.” That may be cold comfort during the crisis—when your house has flooded, who wants to think about spiritual growth?

Reviewed by Lauren F. Winner, assistant professor of Christian spirituality at Duke Divinity School.

But later you will notice. You will wonder how you possibly could have come to where you are without that flood.

The notion that a fall must precede growth does not come just from Jung. As Rohr notes, it is written into the very life of Christ, who descended to the dead before he could be resurrected and ascend into heaven. The falling will happen—there is no way to avoid it. But the growth, the second half of life, doesn’t necessarily happen. You can stay stuck if you wish. You can refuse the second half.

If you welcome the second half of life, this is what you will find: you learn to hear “a deeper voice of God” than you heard before. “It will sound an awful lot like the voices of risk, of trust, of surrender, of soul, of ‘common sense,’ of destiny, of love, of an intimate stranger, of your deepest self.” You can hear this voice in the second half of life precisely because of all the work you did in the first half; your very self is now a container strong enough to hold the call of the intimate stranger. You find that you can

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let go of things—pain, judgments, even the need to make judgments. You may find that you are reading a lot of poetry; you may find that you are reading the mystics, who seemed opaque to you before. There is a gravitas in this second half of life, writes Rohr, but it is “held up by a much deeper lightness.”

As I sat with Rohr, as I read, I found that I was praying: for two friends currently divorcing, for three families struggling with drug addiction, for my ex-husband, for myself—my past self, my self yet-to-come. Rohr’s framework, to put it simply, seems true. We all know people who are in that second half of life. They are the people about whom we say, *That is the person I want to be, the Christian I want to be, when I grow up.*

*Falling Upward* abounds with wisdom. But I do have one quibble: sometimes an unwelcome tone creeps into Rohr’s prose—a tone of superiority toward those still in the first half of life, in particular a tone of unnuanced criticism of a church that, in Rohr’s estimation, seems stuck in the first half. To wit: “Most people facing the important transformative issues of social injustice, divorce, failure, gender identity, an inner life of prayer, or any radical reading of the Gospel are usually bored and limited by the typical Sunday church agenda.” Well, no. Some people in a crisis are “limited” by that “agenda”; others are nourished by it. Indeed, the church is where many people find their inner life of prayer; the church is the very body that sustains many people through a divorce. One wishes that an editor had picked up the red pen at these moments, because they are jarring—at odds with the generosity and capaciousness that generally characterize the book.

And one question: some post-Jungian psychoanalytic theorists have suggested that, contra Jung, a dramatic crisis may not be the necessary precondition of the kind of growth Jung describes. Similarly, I wonder if the path from building the self to hearing the intimate stranger, the path from ego to spiritual spaciousness, is always linear. Perhaps some of us move back and forth between the halves; perhaps we cycle through them, over and over again. Part of the paradox of Rohr’s second half may be that only in that half of the spiritual life does one have the wisdom

to understand that however wonderful the nearness of the intimate stranger may be, however free and peaceful this new stage feels, we may not get to stay here either, any more than we got to stay in that ego-building stage that came before.

## The Christian Moral Life: Faithful Discipleship for a Global Society

By Patricia Lamoureux and Paul J. Wadell  
Orbis, 328 pp., \$30.00 paperback

Patricia Lamoureux and Paul Wadell have written a text in fundamental Catholic moral theology with a creative twist. The topics of several of the chapters are unconventional and fresh, but even when the topic is traditional, the approach contains refreshing elements. The book consistently responds to Vatican II’s call to the church to renew moral theology by making it biblically based, centered on Jesus Christ as the model of Christian life and engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

The authors explore various interrelated facets of Christian discipleship. The connections between spirituality and morality and between philosophy and theology are woven throughout the text. Lamoureux and Wadell begin with the pattern of call and response, gift and task that characterizes all aspects of faithful discipleship, and they contend that virtue is inseparable from vision—that to live morally we must correct our vision and see as Jesus sees. They argue that virtues are key to a good life and to human flourishing and that virtues are both infused into us as a result of God’s grace and acquired habits born of practice.

Christian discipleship is about relationship—with God, with others, with self, with the Earth and with other species. Sin is a violation of all these rela-

tionships and an act of self-sabotage. Thus we need a conversion, a radical transformation. We need to put on Christ, to see and think with Christ, to be incorporated into the community of disciples and to take up the mission and ministry of Christ. The reign of God is already here because of the Paschal mystery—the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus—but because it is not yet complete, it requires our cooperation, our service and our work for justice.

Lamoureux and Wadell critically and clearly explain the categories of Catholic moral theology, such as the types of sin, the kinds of love and the varieties of justice. The sources for their moral theology are scripture, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and contemporary scholarship. Although they attend to fundamental questions of meaning and the good life, they do not explicitly develop the concept of natural law. The authors think that the Holy Spirit is guiding the whole church—the faithful, its leaders and its scholars and saints, who should be in fruitful dialogue

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*Reviewed by J. Milburn Thompson, who is chair and professor of theology at Bellarmine University, Louisville, Kentucky, and the author of Justice and Peace: A Christian Primer and Introducing Catholic Social Thought, both published by Orbis.*



with one another in guiding the formation of conscience in the contemporary world.

I found the second chapter, on learning to see, and the section "Love for All of God's Creation," in the chapter on love, especially insightful. Lamoureux and Wadell correctly contend that "unless we *see* rightly we cannot possibly *act* rightly." They draw on the philosophical essays of Iris Murdoch to illustrate how we humans are masters of illusion, how we distort our vision and delude ourselves about it. They point to Jesus' parables as ways to correct our vision, to overcome "blindsight" and learn to see. The parables have been called blindside storytelling because they subvert our assumptions and perspectives, reorienting us to the new reality of the reign of God. The parable of the rich fool, for example, undermines the logic of prudent planning and replaces it with a call to extravagant generosity. Kingdom economics requires compassion and open-handedness rather than the logical self-interest of capitalist expectations. Perhaps, then, my anxious planning for retirement does not reflect the values of Christian discipleship.

In the brief section on love for creation, the authors argue that we ought to love and value other creatures and species because God loves and values them. Creation is God's handiwork, declared by God to be good. It is good for its own sake, not just to serve human interests. This perspective takes us beyond a stewardship ethic and toward a kinship ethic. It implies, as Lamoureux and Wadell point out, that human interests should not always trump the interests of nonhuman creation, that humanity should be willing to sacrifice on behalf of creation and that we need to cultivate humility in dealing with other species.

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This too is a different way of seeing that can lead to a transformed way of living.

There are two problems that I see with this fine book, and both are matters of expectations. The subtitle, *Faithful Discipleship for a Global Society*, might lead one to think that the book seriously addresses moral issues surrounding globalization. The authors do draw on liberation theology in Latin America and Asia, consistently point to the social and justice implications of Christian discipleship and at several points enter into interreligious dialogue with Buddhism, Confucian traditions and Islam, seeking parallels to Christian moral thought. There is, however, no explicit discussion of the cultural and economic dislocations associated with globalization.

Furthermore, one might expect that a book called *The Christian Moral Life* would address not only ethical models, the meaning of the good life and the mission of Christian discipleship but also a method for making right decisions. This book, however, remains on an abstract level; there is no applied ethics here. No particular moral issues are raised, no cases are explored. Perhaps that would be a different book, or volume two of this book. The Catholic moral tradition, however, has dwelt not only on discipleship, conversion, virtues and conscience but also on moral norms, case-based reasoning and factors in the formation of conscience. It has generally gotten its hands dirty in the nitty-gritty of the good life, in the dilemmas of actually living as disciples. One result of this level of abstraction is that the book is not as engaging and accessible as the authors hope it will be. Lamoureux and Wadell write gracefully and use literature to illustrate some of their theological concepts, but the book begs for more grounding in the concrete lives of Christian disciples.

This is an in-depth introduction to fundamental moral theology that is based on scripture and contemporary scholarship. It persuasively suggests that human happiness and human flourishing are inherently compatible with faithful discipleship and a virtuous life. Well written, creative and insightful, it is likely to cause the serious Christian to pause and meditate on the many dimensions of Christian discipleship that it explores.

## BookMarks

### **Sex, Mom, & God: How the Bible's Strange Take on Sex Led to Crazy Politics—and How I Learned to Love Women (and Jesus) Anyway**

by Frank Schaeffer

Da Capo, 320 pp., \$26.00

Schaeffer grew up in L'Abri, the evangelical Christian community retreat in the Swiss Alps run by his parents, Francis and Edith, who raised him on Old Testament bedtime stories and right-wing politics. As an adult, he has written three books—*Crazy for God*, *Patience with God* and now *Sex, Mom, & God*—skewering his fundamentalist upbringing and commending himself for the oft-accomplished feat of diverting from the strict faith of his parents. In this book, he exercises this liberation by fixating on the sexuality of his mother. He discusses her belief in the importance of both premarital abstinence and intramarital abandon as a model of how organized religion should deal with sexuality within its moral framework. He argues, rather, that its confining attitudes have hampered the debates on abortion, homosexuality, adultery and Christian marriage.

### **Amazing Grace in the Midst of Grief**

By James I. Mayfield

Cascade Books, 103 pp.,

\$16.00 paperback

Through stories and description Mayfield explains the complex nature of grief. Rather than seeing it as stages through which we predictably go, he argues that grief is a complex tangle of multicolored threads involving anger, fear, denial, regret and sorrow but also relief, gratitude, forgiveness and acceptance. The threads are distinguishable, yet they cannot be disentangled from each other. While grief is a powerful human force, it need not destroy us. In ways imperceptible at times, grief can be a source of God's grace in our lives. Even anger can be a source of grace if it serves as a catalyst for taking positive action. The instruments of God's grace in grief are often other people. This small, practical book is a revised edition, formerly published as *Discovering Grace in Grief*.



## Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 2

Directed by David Yates

Starring Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint and Ralph Fiennes

There's never been anything quite like the Harry Potter movies—a film series that overlapped with the septet of novels on which it's based, reaching the midpoint of the narrative a year before its creator, J. K. Rowling, put out the last book and then spinning out the movie arc for another five years. The finale, *Deathly Hallows, Part 2*, is all one might hope.

Director David Yates and screenwriter Steve Kloves assume that viewers are familiar with the most intricate narrative details and don't need to start by being caught up. So the movie hits the ground running, with Harry and his friends at a safe house, trying to work out a way to destroy the Horcruxes that contain fragments of the soul of Lord Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes) and thus shore up his power. Back at Hogwarts, the students and professors are under the thumb of Voldemort's cruel minions. We see images of fascism: the students march in the courtyard while spectral Dementors hover ominously above the school. The world has fallen into darkness, and as Harry, Hermione and Ron (Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint) return to Hogwarts to lead the resistance, the imagery takes on a Götterdämmerung-like splendor.

The film's themes, welling up from the last three episodes, are coming of age, camaraderie, the link between past and present and the complex nature of loss—its power to strengthen as well as to provide a source of inspiration and understanding. Before Harry faces Voldemort in battle, he communes with the spirits of his dead, including the father and mother who died to save his life when he was a baby. "I never meant any of you to die for me," Harry protests softly. This scene



PHOTO BY JAAP BUITENDIJK. © 2011 WARNER BROS. PICTURES.

**EPIC FINALE:** *Harry Potter* (Daniel Radcliffe, left) and friends engage in a climactic showdown with the forces of evil.

makes explicit the idea on which much of the story is premised: that those who love Harry continue to stand with him even in death. (It's especially affecting to see again Sirius Black, Harry's godfather, played by Gary Oldman in flowing Byronic locks.)

Harry even communes with his mentor, the late Hogwarts headmaster Albus Dumbledore (Michael Gambon), in a gorgeous sequence laid in a dreamlike version of a train station. At the end of their conversation, the headmaster tells Harry that while the exchange took place in Harry's head, that doesn't mean it isn't real. The comment is a reminder of how we keep the ones we love inside us and draw on them in times of crisis. Love is the power that the movie offers up against fear, and as the story unfolds the smashing of the Horcruxes becomes a metaphor for Voldemort's decreasing ability to rule through fear. This notion is perhaps clearest in the behavior of Narcissa Malfoy (Helen McCrory), whose love for her son Draco (Tom Felton) eventually transcends her fear of the dark lord and scrambles her allegiances.

The climax is a little confusing; Kloves cuts a plot point or two that might have clarified it. He and Yates seem determined to pare down the focus of the last battle—to boil it down to the struggle between Harry and Voldemort and to the triumvirate of Harry, Hermione and Ron. Even the most significant of the adults have always been supporting players in the Harry Potter stories. Like all

great fairy tales, they're about how children navigate the frightening world bequeathed to them by adults.

## The Trip

Directed by Michael Winterbottom

Starring Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon

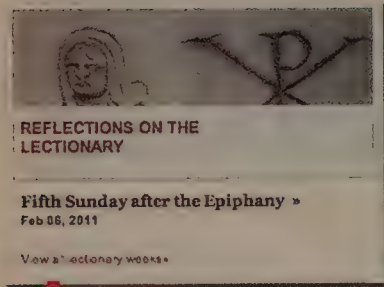
In *The Trip*, culled from a British TV miniseries, comedian Steve Coogan, ostensibly playing himself, is sent by a newspaper to tour England's finest restaurants, accompanied by his friend and fellow comic Rob Brydon. The two stars improvise inventively over one meal after another; the high point is their competition to produce the most accurate impersonation of actor Michael Caine. The movie is both highly enjoyable and very sweet.

It's also, surprisingly, quite touching. Steve and his girlfriend Mischa (Margo Stilley) are taking a break; she's in America, and their cellphone exchanges are awkward and unsatisfying, as is his conversation with his teenage son, who's careful not to show his feelings. Rob has a wife and a baby he can't wait to return to; Steve still thinks of himself as a free spirit but is aware that he's getting too old for the part. His loneliness is palpable, especially when the director, Michael Winterbottom, frames him against the vast English countryside. The film is alternately uproarious and melancholy.

*Reviewed by Steve Vineberg, who teaches at the College of the Holy Cross.*

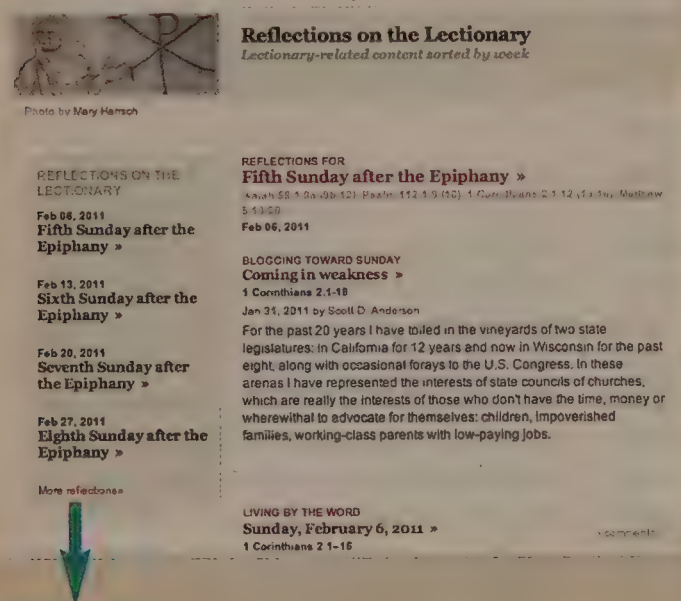


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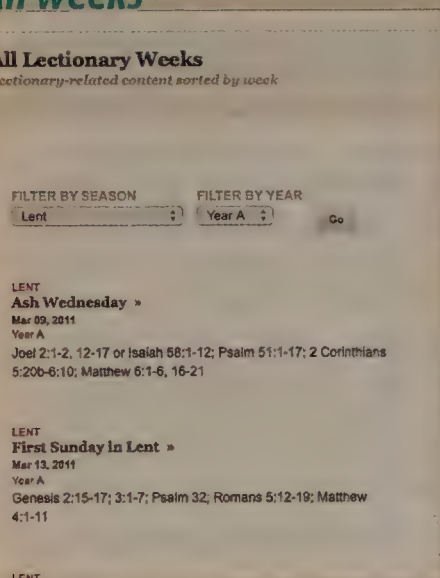
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by Rodney Clapp

# American SOUNDINGS

## Kneel as you are able

Unless you're Pentecostal, you've probably never ran or jumped or worked up a sweat in church. But whatever your tradition, there is such a thing as churchly calisthenics. One such exercise is noted regularly in my church's worship bulletin: "Kneel as able."

In a way, it's a strange instruction—entirely unlike anything Jack LaLanne or Richard Simmons or a marine drill sergeant would exhort. Kneeling is no athletic feat, not even of a minor sort. But it's a necessary word of direction (and word of permission,

was still stuck in the kneeling position. I glimpsed a look of surprise and panic appearing in his eyes.

Then I offered my hand. What he needed, of course, was something to hold on to. With gentle assistance he rose back onto his feet. Later he thanked me for the assist, and he remarked that this was the first time he had had such a difficulty. He had reached an age and a bodily state in which he could no longer spring upright from a kneel-

God's grace that enables any of us to humble ourselves, and it is God's grace that lifts us back up from our humbled position. Without grace and its acceptance, none of us would have the mind or energy to kneel in humility, to bow our heads in prayer, to stand in adoration. Without faith and hope in grace, we would never achieve the joy that raises us back up off our knees. We kneel by grace and we stand tall by grace, and grace alone.

Second, churchly calisthen-

involving both body and spirit.

Finally, the calisthenics of worship are cooperative, not competitive. A track or football coach would frown if athletes boosted one another in doing jumping jacks or pulled one another aloft as they did pushups. But the stretching exercises of the church are only enhanced when we assist one another. We are all and together one body, the apostle Paul teaches, and the body is whole and coordinated only with cooperation.

How appropriate it is at communion that married couples (and others) give one another a hand when they rise from their kneeling positions. Such cooperative assistance is a reminder that we would be lost without God's grace found in and through one another. Christian worship is a communal activity, through and through.

In the end, I have only one nit to pick with the instruction "kneel as able." It might more accurately read "kneel as enabled." Then it would be clear that we all have a responsibility for one another in our worship, and that every one of us depends in all our actions on God's active love and care. Such is the first and most basic lesson of churchly calisthenics.

## Whatever your tradition, your church has some kind of worship calisthenics.

since it's implicit that you don't have to kneel if you are unable).

The sensibleness of "kneel as able" was brought home to me in a recent service, which included the veneration of the cross. While I held a small, three-foot cross, the congregants came forward to kneel before it and honor Christ's sacrifice. Matters proceeded ordinarily until one man, just into his seventies, stepped forward. He knelt on one knee, grasped the heel of the cross and bowed his forehead against it. Then he straightened and started to stand, but stayed planted on his knee. He churned his bent elbows, making a flying motion, but

ing position. "I can get down just fine," he said. "It's the getting back up that's now a challenge."

"Kneel as able" is written for people like this man, since kneeling is no simple or comfortable matter for the elderly or the disabled. But in another way, "kneel as able" is written for all of us, young and old, full-bodied or not. After all, kneeling is a vulnerable and humbling position, and pride can disable kneeling as effectively as a bum knee or a bad back.

All this suggests to me three characteristics of churchly calisthenics. First, the calisthenics of worship are foremost about God's grace. It is

ics enlist both the body and the spirit. Of course, you can pray while lying supine or in any bodily position, but it's no accident that we so often dispose our bodies in particular ways when we pray. Kneeling is an innately vulnerable and humbling position. If I want to induce a submissive, respectful spirit, kneeling helps.

Similarly, standing with hands open and arms outstretched puts me in a mood of celebration and reception. It helps my spirit receive God's gifts and to do so readily and with gratitude. We are incarnate creatures, and we worship best or most fully by

*Rodney Clapp's Soundings column appears in every other issue.*



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*Sojourn 3 Sudan 2004, by James Nicholls*

James Nicholls's photograph of a threshold in Sudan accentuates the deep grain of long-weathered wood. The lined hand resting gently on the old timber mirrors the lined wood and holds a rosary. Not only visually but also through symbolism this photograph represents a cross—a point of intersection between the darkness inside and the brightness outside, between matter and spirit, between human and divine, and between time and eternity. Nicholls speculates that the man whose hand is pictured may be dead, for “there is terrible fighting in his area where the Dinka live in the upper Nile region.” ([nichollsphotography.com](http://nichollsphotography.com))

—Lois Huey-Heck



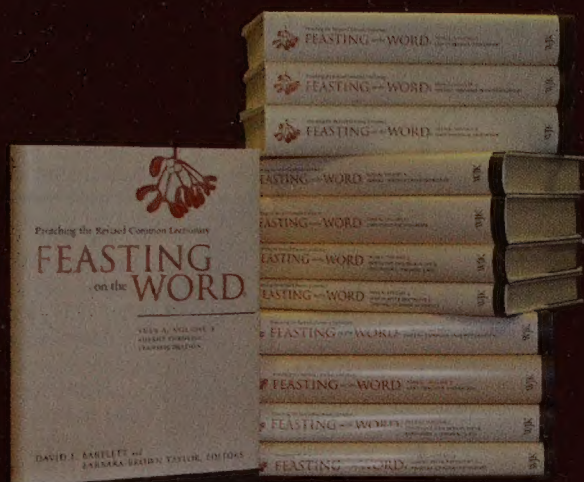
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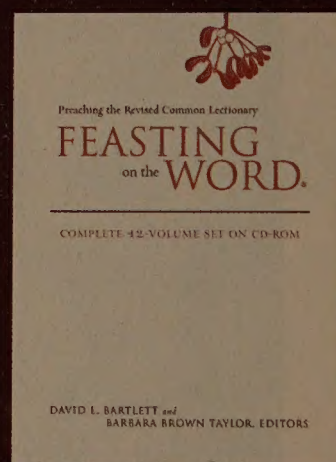
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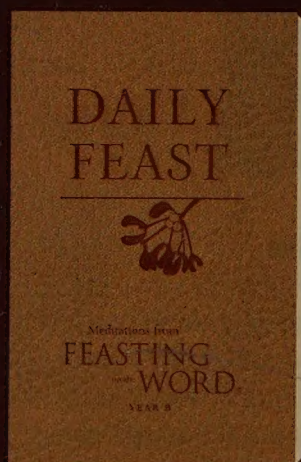
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